My Recollections OF LENIN

By
KLARA ZETKIN

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The present English translation of Clara Zetkin's *My Recollections of Lenin* follows the Russian edition of *Gospolitizdat*, Moscow 1955.

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PREFACE

to the Russian edition of 1955

The present edition of Clara Zetkin's *My Recollections of Lenin* comprises the following items published before by IMEL: *My Recollections of Lenin* (January 1924); *From My Memorandum Book* (January 1925); and *Lenin and the Masses* (January 1929). It also contains a foreword by Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya.

Clara Zetkin's recollections tell the story of the meetings with Lenin in 1920, 1921, and 1922. She sets forth his views on art, culture, the international women's movement, the German revolutionary movement, and other problems.

The authoress of these memoirs was one of the most eminent figures of the international working-class movement. Her book will be helpful in studying the life and work of the great Lenin.

Institute of Marxism-Leninism
of the CC., C.P.S.U.

FOREWORD

by Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya

Clara Zetkin's utterances about Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, including her recollections of him, are of particular interest because she herself was an outstanding champion of the cause of the working class, a shock worker of the world revolution. Last year, on her seventy-fifth birthday, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) sent her ardent greetings:

"To you, veteran of the international working-class movement, tribune of the proletarian revolution, hoary leader of the Communist International, friend and comrade of the labouring masses of the U.S.S.R., and protagonist of the emancipation of working women, the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U.(B.) sends its heartfelt Bolshevik greetings on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the day of your birth. A companion-in-arms of Engels, you fought tirelessly against opportunism in the Second International and wielded the full force of your great mind and revolutionary passion in opposition to Bernsteinism, to revisionism. In the days when the world-wide slaughter began and the bigwigs of the Second International to their utter disgrace harnessed themselves to the war chariot of imperialism, you bore aloft, together with Lenin, together with Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the banner of proletarian internationalism. You were

with us in the October days and the days of battle in the Civil War, when counterrevolution all over the world sought to throttle the world's first proletarian state. A wholeheartedly devoted friend of the U.S.S.R., you are always at your battle station when the enemy threatens the Land of Soviets. The Central Committee fervently wishes and firmly believes that for many years to come you will still be fighting in the front ranks of the Communist International."

But this wish was not destined to come true. She did not even live to be seventy-six; but the last months of her life clearly exemplified the truth of the characterization given her by the Central Committee.

Clara Zetkin was elected to the Reichstag and as she happened to be its oldest member it was her right and duty to open it. Nobody expected her to be physically able to do so. She was then living in a holiday home near Moscow, barely strong enough to rise from her bed and gasping every minute for breath. But when the Communist Party of Germany wrote to her that it was desirable for her to come, she never hesitated a moment. She gathered all her remaining strength and went, taking along a supply of camphor and various emergency drugs. She knew the danger she was facing, the danger of falling into the hands of the fascists and of being done to death by them. But this did not deter her. With a supreme effort she managed to deliver the opening speech—the splendid oration of a Communist by conviction. Going beyond the purlieus of the Reichstag and addressing the whole working people of Germany, she spoke to them about Russia, of the need to fight, of socialist revolution. She closed with the following words:

"I open the Reichstag in discharge of my duty as its presiding senior member and hope that despite my present infirmity I shall yet have the good fortune to open,

as its presiding senior member, the First Congress of Soviets of Soviet Germany!"

On her return to Russia Clara Zetkin felt her strength ebbing, but she did not give up work. Lying sick in her deathbed she dictated the pamphlet *Lenin's Legacies to the Women of the World.* Its last words read:

"A great goal brightens the world. This historic moment demands the most resolute struggle. It imperatively dictates to all proletarian women, to all women of toil: look, realize, act, fight, fight! This great moment will not brook women's narrow horizons. Widen your ranks, march on, ye millions of unknown, nameless fighters! You are destined to win. You must take your place in the ranks of those who execute Lenin's legacies and continue his immortal teachings and works internationally. Be worthy continuers of Lenin's cause, worthy pupils of Lenin."

I was at Clara's on the first and second of May and told her about the congress of men and women collective farmers. Afterwards she wrote a letter to the women of the Krasnaya Pakhra collective farm on the importance of the collective farm movement, explaining that Comrade Stalin's Congress speech about women on the collective farm ought to inspire them and serve them as a guide to action.

Vladimir Ilyich was very fond of Clara Zetkin and held her in high esteem as a stalwart revolutionary, a thorough Marxist and an implacable foe of opportunism in the Second International. He enjoyed heart-to-heart talks with her on subjects he was engrossed in. He liked to discuss aspects of problems which he did not moot officially. He conversed with her on art, cultural development, the international women's movement, the German movement, and other themes he was keenly interested in, because he knew that she had given much thought to these issues, had raised them in all their broadness, and that she could appreciate his ideas.

Clara Zetkin's reminiscences of Lenin and her articles and speeches about him are evidence of how highly she valued the man, how close and dear the Soviet land was to her heart and how gripped she was by the ever-expanding socialist construction in our country. Her Lenin articles were written in a style somewhat different from ours. There is more of revolutionary fervour in them, more of what I should call the international sweep, a somewhat different frame within which she fits her recollections of Lenin. These features give a peculiar flavour and value to these reminiscences. It is important, essential for us to know what Clara Zetkin, who loved Lenin so dearly, had to say about him.

N. Krupskaya

August 10, 1933

MY RECOLLECTIONS OF LENIN

In these dismal hours of sorrow, when each one of us is stricken with deepest grief, when we all become conscious of the fact that one irreplaceable has departed from our midst, the clear living memory of him who is gone rises before us revealing, as if in a flash of lightning, the great man embodied in the great leader. Lenin's personality bears the impress of harmonious fusion of greatness as a leader and greatness as a man. Thanks to this peculiar feature the image of Lenin—to use the words in which Marx assayed the glorious deeds of the fighters of the Commune—"is forever engraved in the great heart of the working class." For the labouring masses—all those who have fallen victim to wealth, all those who have no knowledge of the conventional lies and the hypocrisy of the bourgeois world—with delicate instinct discern the difference between what is true and what is false, between modest greatness and bumptious swagger, between love for them expressed in action and a hunt for popularity reflecting mere vanity.

I consider it my duty to make public every scrap of information contained in my treasure store of personal recollections of our unforgettable leader and friend. I owe it to Vladimir Ilyich and I owe it to those to whom he devoted his whole activity—the proletarians and working

people in general, those who are exploited, or drudge in involuntary servitude in any part of the world, those to whom he directed his love and upon whom he proudly looked as revolutionary fighters and builders of a higher social order.

It was early in the autumn of 1920 that I met Lenin for the first time after the outbreak of the Russian Revolution that shook the entire world. It happened right after my arrival in Moscow, during a Party meeting held, if my memory serves me right, in the Sverdlov Hall of the Kremlin. Lenin looked unchanged; he had hardly aged, as far as I was able to tell. I could swear he wore the same modest, carefully brushed jacket I had seen him in when we met for the very first time, in 1907, at the World Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart. Rosa Luxemburg, who had the sharp eye of the artist that detects every distinctive feature, pointed out Lenin to me with the words: "Take a good look at that man. He's Lenin. Note his cranium: how stubborn, strong-willed it is."

In speech and behaviour Lenin had not changed. At times the debates were very lively, even passionate. As he used to do before, at Second International congresses, so now Lenin paid close attention to the course of the discussion, displayed great self-possession, and evinced a calmness that betrayed his inner concentration, energy and resilience. This was shown by his interjections, remarks and regular speeches when he took the floor. It seemed that nothing worthwhile noticing escaped his keen glance and lucid mind. I was struck at that meeting, as I had usually been before and was ever after, by these most characteristic features of Lenin—his simplicity and cordiality, his naturalness in all his dealings with comrades. I say "naturalness" because it was my definite impression that that man could not behave otherwise

than he did. His attitude towards comrades was the natural expression of his whole inner being.

Lenin was the unchallenged leader of a party which deliberately entered the battle for power, explained the goal and pointed the way to Russia's proletariat and peasantry. Invested with their confidence the Party administers the country and exercises the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin was the leader of the great country that became the first proletarian state in the world. His thoughts and desires dwell in the minds of millions of people also beyond the frontiers of Soviet Russia. His opinion on any issue is decisive throughout our land; his name is the symbol of hope and emancipation wherever oppression and enslavement exist.

"Comrade Lenin leads us to communism. In spite of all hardships we shall hold out," declared the Russian workers. And imbued with the vision of the ideal kingdom, mankind's highest society, they rushed to the front hungry and freezing or harnessed themselves to the titanic task of restoring the economic life of the country in the face of incredible odds.

"We have no reason to be afraid the landlords may return and take the land away from us. Ilyich and the Bolsheviks together with the Red Army men will come to our rescue." Thus figured the peasants, whose land hunger had been satisfied.

"Long Live Lenin!" was a frequent inscription on church walls in Italy, whose proletarians enthusiastically hailed the Russian Revolution as their own emancipator. The name of Lenin became the rallying cry, both in America, Japan, and India, of all those who challenged the rule of the vested interests.

How simple and modest was Lenin's manner of speaking! Yet he had already accomplished a gigantic historical task and upon his shoulders rested the colossal weight of unlimited confidence, of the gravest responsi-

bility, and of unceasing work. He completely merged in the mass of the comrades, was of the same stuff as they, was just one of many. Unlike so-called "leading personages" he never wanted to exert pressure, and never did so by a single gesture or facial expression. Such ways were contrary to his nature and he really was a striking personality.

Messengers would constantly deliver communications from various establishments, both civil and military, and he would at once send off his reply in a few lines quickly jotted down. Lenin had a smile and a friendly nod for everyone. This was invariably answered by a joyful lighting-up of the face. During sessions he would from time to time converse with responsible officials on urgent problems, making sure not to distract others. When an intermission was announced Lenin had to withstand a veritable onslaught. Clusters of people surrounded him on all sides—men and women, from Petrograd, Moscow and diverse other centres of the movement. He was beset by a particularly great number of the youth. Each one of them wanted him to endorse his pet scheme. And thus petitions, inquiries and proposals just showered down upon him.

Lenin heard out and answered everyone with a patience that won him the hearts of all. He listened to every plaint with sympathetic understanding and was always ready to help, whether it was a matter of Party work or a tale of personal woe. It gladdened one's soul to watch how he dealt with the youth: an unalloyed comradely attitude, free from the pedantry, preceptorial tone of voice and presumptuousness of manner paraded by those of middle age who believe that their years, without more, confer upon them incomparable superiority and virtue.

Lenin always conducted himself as an equal among equals. There was not a trace of the potentate in him.

The authority he enjoyed in the Party was due to his prestige as an ideal leader and comrade, to whose superiority one bends one's knee fully aware that he will always understand and wants to be understood in turn. It grieved me to compare the genial atmosphere surrounding Lenin with the stiff pomposity of the "Fathers of the Party" of German Social-Democracy. The lack of good taste displayed by the Social-Democrat Ebert as "Herr President of the German Republic" in his attempt to ape the bourgeoisie in all its manners and customs seemed the height of absurdity to me. Ebert lost all sense of human dignity. Of course these gentry were never so "reckless and desperate" as to "strive," like Lenin, "to make a revolution." And with them to defend the bourgeoisie the latter can snore still more tranquilly than it did even in the days of the thirty-five monarchs that reigned at the time of Heinrich Heine—can snore until finally here too revolution leaps from the historically prepared, historically necessary stream of events and thunders at this society: "Beware!"

* * *

My first visit to Lenin's family strengthened the impression I gained of him at the Party Conference and which had become firmer after several conversations with him. Lenin lived in the Kremlin. Before you could get to him several guards had to check you—a precaution explained by the incessant counterrevolutionary terrorist attempts then being made on the lives of the leaders of the revolution. Lenin on occasion held receptions in the magnificently appointed state apartments. His private apartment where he lived with his family was very simple and unpretentious. I have often been in workers' quarters furnished better than the rooms occupied by "Moscow's all-powerful dictator."

Lenin's wife and sister were just having supper, to join which I was at once most cordially invited. It was the modest evening meal of the average Soviet office worker at that time, consisting of tea, black bread, butter and cheese. His sister then set out in quest of something "sweet," i. e., dessert, "in honour of the guest." Fortunately a small jar containing some jelly was located. It is a well-known fact that the peasants kept "their Ilyich" abundantly supplied with white flour, lard, eggs, fruit, etc., but everybody also knows that almost none of all those good things remained in Lenin's larder. Everything was sent to the hospitals and children's homes, as Lenin's family strictly adhered to the principle of living as frugally as the mass of the working population.

I had not seen Comrade Krupskaya, Lenin's wife, since March 1915, when the Berne International Women's Socialist Conference was held. Her attractive face with its soft kind eyes bore unmistakable traces of the treacherous disease that was sapping her strength. Except for that she was the same as I had known her—the embodiment of frankness, simplicity and a rather Puritanic modesty. Her hair, combed smoothly back and gathered up behind in a simple knot, as well as her plain dress, gave her the appearance of the tired-out wife of a worker forever worrying whether she would manage to get everything done. Comrade Krupskaya, the "first lady of the land," according to bourgeois conception and terminology, is indisputably the first in devotion to the cause of oppressed and suffering humanity. The most sincere community of ideas on the aim and purpose of life is what united her and Lenin. She was Lenin's right hand, his chief and best secretary, his most convinced ideological associate, the most experienced interpreter of his views, indefatigable alike in enlisting friends and adherents wisely and tactfully, and in propagating his ideas

among the workers. In addition she had her own special sphere of activity to which she was devoted body and soul—public education and training.

It would be not only ridiculous but an aspersion to suppose that Comrade Krupskaya played the role of "Lenin's wife" in the Kremlin. She worked together with her husband and shared his worries, took care of him as she had been doing all her life with him, as she had done when the conditions of the underground and severe persecution separated them. With the solicitude only a mother could show she turned Lenin's abode—with the domestic help of his affectionate sister—into a "home, sweet home." Of course, not in the hypocritical sense of the German philistine but in the light of the spiritual atmosphere that filled it and reflected the relations which united the people that lived and worked here. One received the impression that in their relations truth, sincerity, and mutual understanding and affection prevailed. Although till then I had been little acquainted personally with Comrade Krupskaya I immediately felt at home in her society and friendly care. When Lenin arrived and somewhat later a huge cat made her appearance, cheerily welcomed by every member of the family—she nimbly jumped on the shoulders of the "dreadful terrorist leader" and then curled up conveniently on his knees—I thought I was back home or at Rosa Luxemburg's with her Mimi, a cat that became a memento to all her friends.

Lenin found us three women discussing art, education and upbringing. I happened at that moment to be voicing enthusiastically my astonishment at the unique and titanic cultural work of the Bolsheviks, at the unfolding in the country of creative forces striving to blaze new trails for art and education. I did not hide my impression that much of what I observed was still conjectural, mere groping in the dark, just experimental, and that along

with zealous searches for new content, new forms and new ways in the sphere of culture one encounters at times an unnatural desire to follow the fashion and blindly imitate western models. Lenin at once plunged with keen interest into the conversation.

"The awakening of new forces and the harnessing of them to the task of creating a new art and culture in Soviet Russia are a good thing, a very good thing. The hurricane speed of their development is understandable and useful. We must make good the loss incurred by centuries of neglect and make good is what we want to do. Chaotic fermentation, feverish hunt for new slogans, slogans acclaimed today with shouts of 'hosanna' in relation to certain trends in art and fields of thought, and rejected tomorrow with cries of 'crucify him'—all this is inevitable.

"Revolution unleashes all forces fettered hitherto and drives them from their deep recesses of life to the surface. Take for example the influence exerted by fashion and the caprices of the tsarist court as well as by the tastes and whims of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie on the development of our painting, sculpture and architecture.

"In society based on private property the artist produces for the market, needs customers. Our revolution freed artists from the yoke of these extremely prosaic conditions. It turned the state into their defender and client providing them with orders. Every artist, and everyone who considers himself such, has the right to create freely, to follow his ideal regardless of everything.

"But, then, we are Communists, and ought not to stand idly by and give chaos free rein to develop. We should steer this process according to a worked-out plan and must shape its results. We are still far, very far from this. It seems to me that we too have our Doctors Karlstadt.[1] We are too great 'iconoclasts in painting.' The

beautiful must be preserved, taken as an example, as the point of departure even if it is 'old.' Why turn our backs on what is truly beautiful, abandon it as the point of departure for further development solely because it is 'old'? Why worship the new as a god compelling submission merely because it is 'new'? Nonsense! Bosh and nonsense! Here much is pure hypocrisy and of course unconscious deference to the art fashions ruling the West. We are good revolutionaries but somehow we feel obliged to prove that we are also 'up to the mark in modern culture.' I however make bold to declare myself a 'barbarian.' It is beyond me to consider the products of expressionism, futurism, cubism and other 'isms' the highest manifestation of artistic genius. I do not understand them. I experience no joy from them."

I could no longer restrain myself and admitted that my perception likewise was too dull to understand why an inspired face should be artistically expressed by triangles instead of a nose and why the striving for revolutionary activity should transmute the human body, in which the organs are linked up and form one complicated whole, into an amorphous soft sack hoisted on two stilts and provided with two five-pronged forks.

Lenin burst into a hearty laugh.

"Yes, dear Clara, it can't be helped. We're both old fogies. For us it is enough that we remain young and are among the foremost at least in matters concerning the revolution. But we won't be able to keep pace with the new art; we'll just have to come trailing behind.

"But," Lenin continued, "our opinion on art is not the important thing. Nor is it of much consequence what art means to a few hundred or even thousand out of a population counted by the millions. Art belongs to the people. Its roots should be deeply implanted in the very thick of the labouring masses. It should be understood and loved by these masses. It must unite and elevate their feelings

thoughts and will. It must stir to activity and develop the art instincts within them. Should we serve exquisite sweet cake to a small minority while the worker and peasant masses are in need of black bread? It goes without saying that the following is to be understood not only literally but also figuratively: we must always have before our eyes the workers and the peasants. It is for their sake that we must learn to manage, to reckon. This applies also to the sphere of art and culture.

"For art to get closer to the people and the people to art we must start by raising general educational and cultural standards. How are things with us in this regard? You grow enthusiastic over the immense cultural progress we have achieved since our advent to power. We undoubtedly can say without boasting that in this respect we have done quite a lot. We have not only 'chopped off heads,' as charged by the Mensheviks of all countries and by Kautsky of yours, but have also enlightened many heads. 'Many' however only in comparison with the past, in comparison with the sins of the classes and cliques then at the helm. Immeasurably great is the thirst we have instilled in the workers and peasants for education and culture in general. This applies not only to Petrograd and Moscow, and other industrial centres, but far beyond their confines until the very villages have been reached. At the same time we are a poverty-stricken people, completely beggared. We of course wage a real and stubborn war against illiteracy. We establish libraries and reading rooms, in the towns and villages, big and small. We organize all kinds of training courses. We present good shows and concerts, send 'mobile exhibitions' and 'educational trains' all over the land. But I repeat: what does this amount to for a multimillioned population who lack the most elementary knowledge, the most primitive culture? Whereas today ten thousand and tomorrow another ten thousand are enraptured in Moscow

for instance by the splendid performances of our theatres, millions of people are striving to learn how to spell their names and count, are trying to attain enough culture to know that the earth is round, not flat, and that the world is not governed by witches and sorcerers and a 'heavenly father' but by natural laws."

"Comrade Lenin," I remarked, "don't be so aggrieved by illiteracy. In some respects it has made the revolution easier for you. It has prevented the brains of the workers and peasants from being stuffed with bourgeois notions and thus from going to seed. Your agitation and propaganda are sowing virgin soil. It is easier to sow and reap where you do not first have to clear away a whole primeval forest."

"Yes, that's true," Lenin rejoined. "However only within certain limits or, to be more exact, for a certain period of our struggle. We could stand illiteracy during the fight for power, while it was necessary to destroy the old state machinery. But are we destroying merely for the sake of destroying? We are destroying for the purpose of creating something better. Illiteracy goes badly, is absolutely incompatible with the job of restoration. After all the latter, according to Marx, must be the task of the workers and, I add, of the peasants themselves if they want to attain freedom. Our Soviet system facilitates this task. Thanks to it thousands of ordinary working people are today studying in various Soviets and Soviet bodies how to expedite restoration. They are men and women 'in the prime of life,' as they are wont to say in your country. Most of them grew up under the old regime and hence received no education, acquired no culture; but now they crave for knowledge. We are fully determined to recruit ever new contingents of men and women for Soviet work and give them a certain degree of practical and theoretical education. Nevertheless we are unable to meet in full our country's demand for personnel

capable of creative leadership. We are compelled to engage bureaucrats of the old type, as a result of which bureaucracy has cropped up here. I absolutely hate it, but of course I have no particular bureaucrat in view. He might be a clever man. What I hate is the system. It has a panalyzing and corrupting effect from top to bottom. Widely disseminated education and training of the people is a decisive factor for overcoming and eradicating bureaucracy.

"What are our prospects for the future? We have built splendid institutions and adopted really fine measures to enable the proletarian and peasant youth to study, learn and assimilate culture. But here too we are confronted with the same vexatious question: what does all this amount to when you consider the size of our population? What is worse, we are far from having an adequate number of kindergartens, children's homes and elementary schools. Millions of children grow into their teens without an upbringing, without education. They remain as ignorant and uncultured as their fathers and grandfathers were. How much talent perishes on that account, how much yearning for light is crushed underfoot! This is a terrible crime, when considered in terms of the happiness of the rising generation. It amounts to robbing the Soviet state, which is to be transformed into communist society, of its wealth. This is fraught with great danger."

Lenin's voice, usually so calm, quavered with indignation.

"How this question must cut him to the quick," I thought, "if it makes him deliver an agitational speech to the three of us." Someone, I do not remember exactly who, began to speak about a number of particularly obnoxious occurrences in the spheres of art and culture, attributing them to the "conditions of the times." Lenin retorted;

"I know all about that. Many are sincerely convinced that the dangers and difficulties of the present period can be coped with by dispensing *panem et circenses* [bread and circuses, spectacles]. Bread—as a matter of course. As for spectacles—let them be dispensed! I don't object. But let it not be forgotten that spectacles are not really great art. I would sooner call them more or less attractive entertainment. Nor should we be oblivious of the fact that our workers and peasants bear no resemblance to the Roman lumpenproletariat. They are not maintained at state expense but on the contrary they themselves maintain the state by their labour. They 'made' the revolution and upheld its cause, shedding torrents of their blood and bearing untold sacrifice. Indeed, our workers and peasants deserve something better than spectacles. They are entitled to real great art. That is why we put foremost public education and training on the biggest scale It creates a basis for culture, provided of course that the grain problem has been solved. On this basis a really new, great, communist art should arise which will create a form in correspondence with its content. Noble tasks of vast importance are waiting to be solved by our intellectuals along this line. By learning to understand these tasks and accomplishing them they would pay the debt they owe to the proletarian revolution, which to them too opened wide the portals that led from the vile conditions of life, described in such masterly fashion in the *Communist Manifesto*, to the grand open spaces."

That night—the hour was already late—we had broached other themes as well, but the impression these discussions left was but faint in comparison with that produced by Lenin's remarks on art, culture, public education and upbringing.

"How ardently and sincerely he loves the working folks," it flashed through my mind as I returned home with swimming head that wintry night. Yet there are people

who consider him a cold, reasoning machine, take him for a dry formula-fanatic who knows people only as 'historical categories,' and impassively plays with them as with billiard balls."

The remarks dropped by Lenin filled me with such deep emotion that I jotted them down at once in general outline, just as I used to do during my first sojourn on the sacred soil of revolutionary Soviet Russia, when day after day I entered into my diary every detail I thought worthwhile.

Some other statements Lenin made at that time, during a talk with me, have remained deeply embedded in my soul.

I, like many other arrivals from Western countries in those days, had to pay for changing my way of life and got sick. Lenin came over to see me. Like the most tender of mothers he solicitously inquired whether I was receiving proper medical attention and food, was anxious to know what I needed, and so forth. Behind him I saw the kind face of Comrade Krupskaya. Lenin doubted whether everything was really as fine as I thought. He was particularly put out because I lived on the fourth floor of a house which theoretically had a lift that practically did not work.

"Precisely like the love of revolution displayed by the followers of Kautsky and their effort to achieve it," Lenin remarked sarcastically.

Our conversation soon took a political turn.

The Red Army's withdrawal from Poland chilled like a wet blanket the revolutionary hopes we had cherished when the Soviet troops by a bold and lightning-like thrust had reached Warsaw. This untoward event frustrated our dreams.

I described to Lenin the impression produced both on the revolutionary vanguard of the German proletariat, on the Scheidemanns and Dittmanns, and on the petty and

big bourgeoisie by the Red Army men with Soviet stars on their peaked hats, their military uniforms worn to tatters and frequently in civilian clothes, shod with bast shoes or torn boots, and mounted on their spry little horses, as they came into sight at the very borders of Germany. "Will they manage to hold Poland, will they cross the German border, and what will happen then?" Such were the questions that then perplexed the minds of men in Germany. Beer-saloon strategists already prepared to win renown in finding answers for them. And the discovery was made that in all classes, in all social strata, there was much more chauvinist hatred against White Guard imperialist Poland than against the "hereditary foe," the French.

However, even stronger and more insurmountable than the chauvinist hatred against the Poles and the reverent awe in which they stood of the sanctity of the Versailles Treaty was their fear of the spectre of revolution. Both loud-mouthed superpatriots and gently babbling pacifists sought escape from this menace. The big and petty bourgeoisie together with their fellow travellers, the reformist elements stemming from the proletariat, thus viewed the further development of events in Poland with one eye laughing and the other crying.

Lenin listened attentively to my detailed account of the behaviour of the Communist Party as well as of the reformist party and the trade-union leaders.

He sat there silent for a few minutes, absorbed in thought.

"Yes," he said finally, "what happened in Poland was perhaps bound to happen. You of course know all the circumstances which brought it about that our intrepid victorious vanguard could not receive any reinforcements from the infantry nor any weapons or even stale bread in sufficient quantity, and therefore had to requisition grain and other prime necessities from the Polish peasants and

petty bourgeoisie. This made the latter look upon the Red Army men as enemies and not as liberating brothers. Needless to say their feelings, thoughts and actions, far from being socialist or revolutionary, were nationalist, chauvinist, imperialist. The peasants and workers, gulled by the followers of Piłsudski and Daszyński, defended their class enemies, allowed our gallant Red Army men to starve to death, enticed them into ambuscades and killed them.

"Do you happen to know that the conclusion of peace with Poland encountered great resistance here at first, just as had been the case with the Brest-Litovsk Treaty? I had to wage a most desperate struggle, as I stood for accepting the terms of peace, which undoubtedly favoured the Poles and were very harsh for us. Almost all our experts claimed that if the state of affairs in Poland, particularly her straitened financial circumstances, were taken into consideration, peace terms much more in our favour could be obtained, especially if we could still carry on hostilities for a while. In that event even complete victory would not be beyond the range of possibility. If the war were to continue the national contradictions in Eastern Galicia and other parts of Poland would considerably weaken the military strength of imperialist official Poland. In spite of the French subsidies and credits, the constantly growing military expenditures and the impoverished Polish treasury would ultimately stir the peasants and workers to action. Other facts were pointed to as additional proof that if the war were continued our chances would steadily improve."

After a brief pause Lenin resumed:

"I myself think our position did not at all call for peace at any price. We could have held out for the winter. But I figured that from the political point of view it would be wiser to meet the enemy halfway. The temporary sacrifices demanded by an onerous peace seemed

cheaper to me than a continuation of the war. In the long run our relations with Poland have only benefited by this. We are using the peace with Poland to tackle Wrangel with might and main, and deal him such a crushing blow that he will have to leave us in peace forever after. Soviet Russia stands only to gain if she shows by her conduct that she is waging war solely in self-defence and in defence of the revolution, that she is the only big country in the world that stands for peace, that it is not in her nature to want to seize anybody's territory, subjugate any nation or in general embark on any imperialist adventure. But the cardinal point was this: could we, without the most imperative necessity, have consigned the Russian people to the horrors and sufferings of yet another winter campaign? Could we have sent once more to the front our heroic Red Army men, our workers and peasants, who had already suffered so many privations? After many years of imperialist and then of civil war should we start a new winter campaign, in which millions would starve, freeze, perish in silent despair. Provisions and clothes were at a low ebb. The workers were groaning and the peasants grumbling, constantly having to give without ever any return.... No, I could not stand the bare idea of the horror in store for our people from another winter campaign. We simply had to make peace."

As Lenin spoke his face seemed to shrivel up before my very eyes. It was furrowed by innumerable big and small wrinkles, each one the result of great worry or gnawing pain.... Soon he left.

He managed however to tell me incidentally that ten thousand leather suits had been ordered for the Red Army men assigned to take Perekop from the sea. But before these suits were ready we had cause to rejoice over the news that Soviet Russia's fearless defenders, led by the gallant commander Frunze, had taken the isthmus

by storm. This was a military exploit without precedent, the glory of which was shared by men and leaders alike.

It meant one worry less for Lenin—no prospective winter campaign on the Southern Front either.

* * *

The Third World Congress of our International and the Second International Conference of Communist Women brought me once more to Moscow in 1921. My stay was quite prolonged. It was a difficult time. Difficult not so much because the sessions were held during the second half of June and the first half of July, when the brilliant rays of a blazing sun were dazzlingly reflected by the golden cupolas of Moscow's many churches, as because of the atmosphere that prevailed at the meetings of the Comintern parties.

In the Communist Party of Germany this atmosphere was charged with electricity. Tempestuous scenes with verbal thunder and lightning were everyday events. Our pessimists, who get inspired only when they seem to scent disaster, foretold the decay and demise of the Party. The Communists organized in the Third International would have been bad internationalists if the heated debates on questions of theory and tactics in the German Party had not inflamed the minds of the comrades of other countries.

The "German Question" turned into a problem that kept the entire Comintern busy.

The "March action"[2] and the so-called "theory of the offensive"—the theory which formed its foundation and was inseparably linked up with its point of departure, though it was clearly and strictly formulated only afterwards, for the vindication of that action—induced the whole Comintern to make itself thoroughly conversant with world economics and world politics. The Inter-

national was thus firmly to establish its position on questions of principle and tactics, i.e., on its immediate tasks, namely, the revolutionary mobilization and upsurge of the proletariat and of all workers in general.

As is known I was one of the most trenchant critics of the "March action," not because it was not a struggle of the working class, as was contended, but because it was incorrectly conceived by the Party, badly prepared by it, badly organized, and unfortunate in its leadership and execution. I subjected this hastily concocted "theory of the offensive" to withering criticism and besides had a score to settle. The vacillating policy of the Central Committee of the German Party with regard to the Congress of the Italian Socialists at Leghorn[3] and to the tactics of the Executive Committee of the Comintern induced me to withdraw from the Central Committee immediately and demonstratively. I felt very keen pricks of conscience on finding that my "breach of discipline" had brought me into sharp opposition to the very ones to whom politically and personally I stood closest, i.e., my Russian friends.

The Executive Committee of the Comintern and the Central Committee of the Russian Party, as well as many other sections of the Comintern, contained quite a number of fanatic supporters of the "March action." They extolled it as a mass revolutionary struggle which was waged by hundreds of thousands of proletarian revolutionaries. The "theory of the offensive" was at once proclaimed a new gospel of revolution, or something of that sort. I knew that I could expect some very sharp fighting and firmly resolved to accept battle heedless of whether I would win or lose.

What did Lenin think about all these urgent questions? Does he, who knows better than anyone else how to convert Marxist revolutionary principles into action, to apprehend people and things in their historical connection, to evaluate the relation of forces, belong to the

"Lefts" or the "Rights"? Everyone who did not wax enthusiastic over the "March action" and the "theory of the offensive" was labelled a "Right" or an "opportunist" as a matter of course. I waited most impatiently for an unambiguous reply to all these queries.

This reply was to be of decisive moment for the existence of the Comintern, for the achievement of its object, for its ability to act. As soon as I left the Central Committee of the German Party correspondence with my Russian friends ceased for the time, so that my knowledge of Lenin's appraisal of the "March action" and the "theory of the offensive" was restricted to guesswork and rumours which were constantly denied and then reaffirmed. A lengthy talk with him a few days after my arrival answered all my questions without leaving any doubt on the subject.

Before anything else Lenin asked for a report on the state of affairs in Germany, particularly within the Party. I tried to inform him with the greatest possible clarity and impartiality, citing facts and figures. From time to time Lenin put questions, dotting the i's and crossing the t's, and took brief notes. I did not hide my apprehension of the danger which I believed threatened the German Party and the Comintern should the World Congress sponsor the "theory of the offensive." Lenin laughed reassuringly.

"Since when have you joined the prophets of evil?" he inquired. "You can take it for certain that at the Congress the 'theoreticians of the offensive' will have little cause for rejoicing. We are still here. Do you think we who made the revolution have learnt nothing? We want you too to draw a lesson from it. In general, can it be called a theory? It is an illusion, romanticism, nothing but romanticism. That's the very reason why it was invented in 'the land of thinkers and poets,' with the assistance of Bela, who also belongs to a poetically endowed nation

and always feels obliged to be more left than the Left. We must not make up things or daydream. We must evaluate world economics and international politics soberly if we want to fight the bourgeoisie and win. And we do want to win and must win. The decision of the Congress on the tactics of the Comintern and all controversial questions related to it must be interconnected and examined together with our theses on the situation in world economics. All this should form one whole. So far we must listen more to Marx than to Thalheimer or Bela. At any rate the Russian Revolution can teach more than the German 'March action.' As I have already said I am not alarmed in the least by the position the Congress will take."

"The Congress will also have to adopt a resolution on the 'March action,' which after all is actually a product, a practical application of the 'theory of the offensive,' an ocular demonstration of it in history," I said, interrupting Lenin. "Can you separate theory from practice? Yet I see many comrades here defending the 'March action' while rejecting the 'theory of the offensive.' I consider this illogical. Naturally all of us sincerely sympathize with and take our hats off to the proletarians who entered the fray, as they were spurred on to do this by Hörsing's provocation and wanted to defend their rights. We all declared our solidarity with them, regardless of whether there were hundreds of thousands of them, as the tellers of fables wanted us to believe, or only a few thousand. But the position of our Central Committee with regard to the 'March action,' as far as principles and tactics are concerned, was and is something entirely different. That action was and is a putschist mortal sin.

"Undoubtedly the rebuff administered by the revolutionary proletariat and the storm raised by the Party, which, or rather whose leading organs, had calculated badly, must be appraised differently. However you opponents

of the 'March action' are yourselves to blame that everything happened that way. You only saw the wrong policy of the Central Committee, only saw the bad influence it had but never noticed the fighting proletariat in Central Germany. Besides Paul Levi's[4] purely adverse criticism, in which there was no feeling of connection with the Party, embittered the comrades, perhaps more on account of its tone than its contents, and diverted attention from the more important aspects of the problem. As for the position the Congress is likely to take on the 'March action,' you must take into consideration that we have to find a basis for a compromise.

"Do not look at me in surprise and full of reproach. You and your friends have to agree to some sort of compromise. You must be content with having the lion's share in orientating the Congress; you will take this orientation home with you. Your fundamental political line will win, will win a superb victory. This will of course prevent a repetition of the 'March action.' Congress resolutions have to be carried out most strictly. The Executive Committee of the Comintern will take this task upon itself. I have not the slightest doubt on this score.

"The Congress will kill the 'theory of the offensive.' It will map out tactics in complete accord with your views. For that it will have to throw the advocates of the 'theory of the offensive' some crumbs of comfort. If we on discussing the 'March action' put foremost the idea that those who fought were proletarians provoked by the lackeys of the bourgeoisie and if in other respects we display a bit of 'patriotic, historical' indulgence, it will be a good thing. You, Clara, will of course protest against this as amounting to a glossing over of things, and the like. But that will not help you. If we want the tactics subject to confirmation by the Congress to be strict and carried out without much friction, if we want them to become the law governing the activ-

ities of the communist parties, then our dear 'Lefts' should not feel particularly offended and return home without much bitter feeling. We should likewise—even before everything else—pay particular attention to the genuinely revolutionary workers within the Party and without. It seems you wrote to me once that we Russians ought to learn somewhat to understand the psychology of the West and not immediately jab people in the face with a stiff broom. I made a note of that."

A smile of satisfaction passed over Lenin's face.

"So you see, we do not want to jab the 'Lefts' in the face just now; we even intend to pour some balsam over their wounds. They must seriously set about together with you to carry into life the tactics of the Third Congress of our International. After all, this means to assemble the vast masses of the workers, as is called for by your political line, mobilize them and lead them under the guidance of the Communist Party into battle against the bourgeoisie for the conquest of political power.

"However, the main line of the tactics that ought to be followed has been clearly indicated in the resolution you submitted to the Presidium of the Central Committee. That resolution was not in the least adverse in character, like Paul Levi's pamphlet. With all the criticism that resolution contained its character was positive. How then was it possible to reject it? After what kind of discussion and on what grounds? Instead of using the difference between the positive character of your resolution and the negative character of Paul Levi's pamphlet to separate you from Levi they tore you to pieces there and then together with him. How rash such a position is!"

"Perhaps, dear Comrade Lenin, you think you ought to hand me too a few crumbs of comfort," I interjected, "as the job of swallowing down this compromise is still

ahead of me, but I'll manage without getting any comfort or balsam either."

"No, no," Lenin objected, "I was not thinking of doing any such thing. In proof of this I am going to give you just now a sound thrashing. Tell me, please, how did you come to commit such a capital blunder, yes, capital blunder, as to run away from the Central Committee? Where was your common sense? I was indignant about it, extremely indignant. How could you act so recklessly, without thinking of the consequences of such a step, without first notifying us about it, without inquiring our opinion? Why didn't you write to me? The least you could have done was to wire me."

I explained to Lenin all the circumstances that led me to take this decision (it was formed on the spur of the moment due to the situation that had arisen). But he did not think my arguments were sound.

"You're a nice one!" he exclaimed, agitatedly. "You got your credentials to the Central Committee from the Party as a whole and not just from a group of comrades. You had no right to spurn the confidence placed in you."

But on finding that I did not repent enough he continued lecturing me on my withdrawal from the Central Committee:

"Yesterday, at the Women's Conference, you were attacked in a fully organized manner as being the embodiment of opportunism of the very worst type. Is this not to be regarded as punishment fully deserved by you? Attacks directed personally by Reuter.[5] Of course the whole thing was simply a piece of stupidity, of great stupidity, to imagine that the 'theory of the offensive' can be saved by attacking you, using the Women's Conference as an ambuscade. I hope you will consider the political aspect of this episode as ridiculous nonsense, although its moral aspect leaves a very unpleasant after-

taste. My dear Clara, we must always have in mind the workers, the masses. We must always think of them and of the aim we are trying to achieve. Then all these trifles will vanish. Who has not been plagued by them? You can believe me, I too had my full share.... But let us return to your transgression. You must give me your word that you will never again take such an ill-considered step; otherwise our friendship will be at an end."

After that we returned to our muttons. Lenin developed in broad outline his views on the tactics of the Comintern in the form in which he subsequently expounded them in his magnificent, lucid speech at the Congress* and stressed them still more during the polemics at the committee conferences.

"The first tidal wave of the world revolution has receded, the second has not yet risen," Lenin said. "It would be dangerous for us to entertain any illusions on this score. We are not king Xerxes who ordered the sea to be flogged with chains. But does the recording of facts mean to remain inactive, i.e., to abandon the struggle? By no means. Learn, learn, learn! Act, act, act! We must prepare, and prepare thoroughly, so as to be able quite consciously and energetically to make use of the next revolutionary wave when it comes. That's the crux of the matter. What is needed is unflagging Party agitation and propaganda, and then—Party action. But Party action free from the foolhardy notion that it can take the place of mass action. How much we Bolsheviks had to work among the masses before we could say to ourselves: 'Ready, forward!' Hence, to the masses! Winning over the masses, as a preliminary step to winning power. You 'anti-March' people may be fully satisfied with this position of the Congress."

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* See V. I. Lenin, *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 32, pp. 444-453.—*Ed.*

"And Paul Levi? What is your attitude toward him? How do your friends treat him? What position does the Congress take with regard to him?" I had long been anxious to put these burning questions.

"Paul Levi has unfortunately become a special problem," replied Lenin. "Levi himself is largely to blame for that. He left us and his stubbornness has landed him in a blind alley. Of this you could have convinced yourself during the agitational work you carried on so intensively among the delegations. I thought he was closely connected with the proletariat although I detected a certain reserve in his relations with the workers, as if he wanted to 'keep aloof.' When his pamphlet came out I started to have doubts about him. I am afraid he is very much inclined to be self-centred and conceited, that he has a streak of literary vanity. Criticism of the 'March action' was necessary. But what did Paul Levi contribute? He ruthlessly tore the Party to pieces. He not only delivered himself of a very one-sided, exaggerated and even vicious criticism but said nothing that would serve to orientate the Party. He affords grounds for suspecting him of lacking the feeling of solidarity with the Party. This circumstance caused many rank-and-file comrades to become indignant at him. It made them deaf and blind to much that was true in Levi's criticism. Thus a tendency arose—and spread also to comrades from different sections—to make the controversy over the pamphlet, or, to be more exact, over the personality of Paul Levi, the sole object of the debates instead of concentrating on the false theory and bad practice of the 'theoreticians of the offensive' and the 'Lefts.' The latter should be grateful to Levi for having got off so cheaply so far, in fact too cheaply. Paul Levi is his own worst enemy."

I had to let Lenin's last sentences go through without objection but I energetically protested against other pronouncements by him.

"Paul Levi is not a vainglorious, self-satisfied man of letters," I said. "He is not an ambitious political careerist. The unfortunate thing with him is that he was so young when he took over the leadership of the Party. After the assassination of Rosa, Karl and Leo[6] he had to assume this leadership although he frequently was opposed to this. That is a fact. There is not much love lost between him and our comrades and he still prefers solitude, yet I am convinced that he is attached to the Party and the workers with every fibre of his heart. The ill-starred 'March action' shook his whole being. He was firmly convinced that it had frivolously staked the existence of the Party and had destroyed what Karl, Rosa, Leo and many others had given their lives for. He sobbed, literally sobbed with pain at the thought that the Party was going under. He considered it possible to save it only if the most incisive means were applied. He wrote his pamphlet in the same mood in which the legendary Roman hurled himself into the gaping abyss in the hope of saving the motherland at the sacrifice of his life. Levi's intentions were the best, the most unselfish. He meant to heal and not to destroy."

"I do not want to dispute this point with you," Lenin retorted. "You are a better advocate for Levi than he himself. But after all you know that in politics results and not intentions count. There is an ancient saying: 'The road to Hell is paved with good intentions.' The Congress will censure Levi and deal severely with him. That is a foregone conclusion. However Levi will be censured only for breach of discipline and not for the fundamental political point of view he defends. Indeed, how would that be possible at a time when that point of view is recognized as correct? Thus the door is left wide open for him to come back to us—unless he himself bars the way. His political destiny is in his own hands. As

a disciplined Communist he must submit to the decision of the Congress and for a certain length of time disappear from the political arena. Of course that will be a very bitter pill for him to swallow. He has my sympathy and I am sincerely sorry for him. Believe me that. But I cannot save him from this cruel test.

"Levi should agree to this period of probation. This will be a time of intensive study and calm introspection for him. He is young in years and not long in the Party. There are many gaps in his political education and in the realm of political economy he is still in the preparatory class of Marxism. After more thorough studies he will return to us well grounded in principles—a better Party leader, better versed in questions of principle. We must not lose Levi, not for his own sake and not for the sake of our cause. We do not have a superfluity of talent and should value that which we do have. And if your opinion of Paul Levi is correct a final break with the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat will wound him beyond healing. Have a friendly talk with him, help him to see things as they are from the general point of view and not from the point of view that he is right. In this regard you shall have my support. If Levi submits to discipline and behaves right he can, for instance, write for the Party press without signing his name, can get out a few good pamphlets, etc., and after the lapse of three or four months I shall demand his rehabilitation in an open letter. He must still undergo his baptism of fire. Let us hope that he will stand this test."

A sigh escaped my lips and I felt that an inevitable blow was coming, the consequences of which could not be foreseen, and shivering cold crept into my heart.

"Dear Comrade Lenin," I said, "do what you can! You Russians have your hands free to strike blows. Your arms can open quickly to press one to your heart. I have learned from the history of your Party that in your coun-

try curses are succeeded by blessings with the rapidity of a steppe-land wind. But in our country, in us 'people of the West,' blood runs more sluggishly. Upon us lies the burden of those historic strata that Marx speaks of. I repeat my ardent request: do all you can so we won't lose Levi."

Lenin replied: "You can rest assured, I shall keep my promise. If only Levi himself holds out."

He picked up his simple, somewhat worn cap and walked out with calm and energetic step.

* * *

The "oppositionists" in the German delegation—Comrades Malzahn, Neumann, Franken and Müller—quite naturally were eager to meet Lenin in order to shed light, on the basis of their experience, on the nature and consequences of the "March action." Comrade Franken was delegated by the Rhenish Province, the three others were trade-union functionaries. They rightly attached great importance to acquainting the leader of the Comintern with the mood of the vast mass of proletarians imbued with class consciousness and thoroughly revolutionary-minded. They also wanted to tell him their own views on the "theory of the offensive" and the tactics to be employed. Needless to say they also greatly desired to learn Lenin's opinion on problems they were interested in. Lenin considered the wishes of these comrades quite a matter of course. A day and hour were fixed on which he was to meet them at the place where I stayed. The comrades came a little before him as we had to agree on what part we were to take in the debates.

Lenin was noted for his punctuality. He entered the room almost the very minute agreed upon, without any bustle, as usual, hardly noticed by the comrades engaged in ardent discussion.

"How do you do, Comrades?"

He shook hands with each one and sat down in our midst in order to participate immediately in the conversation. To me all this was familiar and I took it for granted that the others all knew Lenin by sight. It never occurred to me to introduce him. After about ten minutes had passed in general talk one of my guests took me aside and asked softly:

"Tell me, Clara, who is that comrade anyhow?"

"Do you mean to tell me you do not recognize him? Why, it's Lenin!"

"Now what do you think of that?" my friend exclaimed, "I thought that being a big boss he would keep us waiting. The most ordinary Party member could not have simpler manners. You should see with what an air of importance ex-comrade Hermann Müller struts about in the Reichstag in his frock-coat ever since he was chancellor once."

I had a notion that the "comrades of the Opposition" and Lenin were examining one another. Lenin was evidently trying to listen, compare, establish facts and get his bearings rather than lay down the law to them, but generally speaking he did not hide his opinion. He plied them with questions and followed their reasoning with close attention, often asking for explanations or additional data. He heavily stressed the importance of planned, organized work among the labouring masses and the need for strict discipline and centralization. Later he told me the meeting had made a good impression on him.

"What fine boys they are, these German proletarians of the type of Malzahn and his comrades! I am ready to concede that in a bazaar full of fakers they won't be able to swallow burning oakum. I don't know whether they have the makings of a shock detachment. But of one thing I am quite sure: that people like them are the very ones to form serried battalions of revolutionary proletarians,

that they represent the main and basic force which bears on its shoulders the full brunt of the work in production and in trade unions. Such elements we must rally and get them to act. They link us up with the masses."

One reminiscence, not political in character. Whenever Lenin came to see me it was a regular holiday for everybody in the house, from the Red Army men who were posted at the entrance to the girl who was helping in the kitchen and the delegates from the Near and Far East who, like me, had made this huge country house their abode—the revolution had turned this former villa of a rich manufacturer into the property of the Moscow Commune.

"Vladimir Ilyich has come!" This news spread like wildfire from mouth to mouth throughout the house. Everybody was on the lookout for him, then ran to the big reception room or gathered at the gate to welcome him. Eyes were lit up with genuine joy when he passed by, greeting the crowd with an amiable smile and exchanging a few words with some. There was not the faintest trace of stiffness, not to mention servility, on the one hand, nor could one discern an iota of condescension or posing on the other. Red Army men, factory workers, office employees, Congress delegates from Daghestan and Persia together with "Turkestanians" in their fantastic costumes who had become famous thanks to Paul Levi,—they all loved Lenin like one of their own and he felt at home among them. A sincere, fraternal sentiment made them all feel akin.

* * *

The "theoreticians of the offensive" scored no success in the debates of the committee conferences and at the Plenary Meeting. Nevertheless they hoped that their views would carry the day. To this end they introduced

amendments and addenda to the theses of the report entitled "On the Tactics of the Comintern." Such amendments were introduced by the German, Austrian and Italian delegations. Comrade Terracini spoke in support of these amendments. Their sponsors passionately argued in favour of their adoption. Everybody was anxious to know what resolution would be passed.

Strained in the extreme was the atmosphere that prevailed in the spacious, high-ceilinged Kremlin hall, in which the bright red of the Communist People's House mantles the coldness and stiffness of the quondam tsarist palace glittering with gold. Hundreds of delegates and a large, closely packed audience followed the proceedings of the session with nerves highly strung.

Lenin took the floor. His report was a masterpiece of the art of conviction. Not a scintilla of rhetoric. He put in operation only his strong clear mind, the inexorable logic of his arguments and the consistency of his line. He hurled his phrases like unhewn rocks and then used them to erect a complete edifice. Lenin did not want to blind his audience, to carry it away. He wanted to convince it. In this he succeeded and his hearers were aroused to enthusiasm. Not by resounding, beautiful words that intoxicate but by lucid thought, which without self-deception comprehends the world of social phenomena in their reality and with ruthless truth reveals "that which is."

Lenin's arguments fell, now like swishing blows of the whip, now like smashing strokes of the sword, on the heads of those who had turned the "hunt for the Rights" into a kind of sport, and of those who did not understand what was needed to ensure victory.

"Only when in the process of struggle we are able to win over the majority of the labouring masses and not only the majority of the industrial workers, and not only

them but the majority of all the exploited and oppressed—only then shall we really be victorious."

Everyone felt that now a decisive battle had been delivered. When I in a burst of enthusiasm shook his hand I could not refrain from telling him:

"Let me tell you, Comrade Lenin, in our country any chairman of a meeting in any little provincial town would be afraid to talk in such a simple, unassuming manner as you did. He would be afraid of seeming to be 'inadequately educated.' I can compare your art of speaking only to the great art of Tolstoi. You have the same broadly-conceived, integrated, definitive line, the same inflexible sense of truth. Herein lies beauty. Perhaps this is a specific feature of the Slavic nature. Is it?"

"I do not know," Lenin answered, "but I do know that when I 'deliver a speech' I always keep the workers and peasants in mind as part of my audience. I want them to understand me. Wherever a Communist speaks he must think of the masses and speak so as to be understood by them. By the way, it's a good thing nobody heard about your hypothesis on national psychology. They might have said: The old man is just about letting them bamboozle him with compliments. We must be careful not to arouse the suspicion that the two old folks were conspiring against the 'Lefts.' After all the 'Lefts' are not engaging in intrigues and conspiracies at all."

Laughing out loud Lenin hurriedly left the hall to tackle the work that was waiting for him.

On the day of my departure Lenin came to take leave of me and to give me some "good advice," which he thought I "needed."

"You of course are not quite satisfied with the way the Congress ended," he said. "You make no secret of the fact that in your opinion the Congress acted illogically in taking the same line as Paul Levi in principle and

tactics and then expelling him from the Party. Punishment had to be meted out. In saying so I have in view not only those mistakes of Levi of which I already spoke. I have in mind mainly how difficult he made it for us to carry out the tactic of winning the masses. He must also admit his mistakes and learn his lesson because, thanks to his political ability, he will soon resume the leadership of the Party."

"It seems to me," I replied, "there is only one way Levi can submit to the discipline of the Comintern without renouncing his own views. He must resign as Reichstag deputy and wind up his journal with an issue that will contain an absolutely objective evaluation of the work of the Third World Congress from the lofty watchtower of history. That of course does not exclude a critical attitude to this work. On the contrary. He should likewise submit a statement that although he considers the resolution of the Congress directed against him unjust and inconsistent he will bow to it in the interests of the Party. By taking such a step, which would show his courage and self-control, Levi would lose nothing as a political figure and a man; he would only gain thereby. He would then be able to show that in spite of the filthy suspicions of his opponents communism is dearer to him than anything else."

"Your suggestion is excellent, really excellent," Lenin remarked, "but will Levi, now that he is expelled from the Party, accept it? At any rate I wish that in the appraisal of Levi your ardent optimism would prove better founded than the pessimism of many others. I once more promise you to write an open letter to the Party urging that Levi be taken back into the Party, unless he himself makes it impossible to take such a step. But let us come back to the main point: all the resolutions of the Third Congress by and large ought to satisfy you. They are of the utmost historical importance and are really a 'turn-

ing point' in the development of the Comintern. They wind up the first period of its development along the road to becoming a mass revolutionary party. In view of this the Congress had to put a definite end to the Left illusion that the world revolution was going ahead without a stop at its original whirlwind pace, that we were on the crest of a second revolutionary wave and that the possibility of victory of our banner depended solely on the will of the Party and its activity. Of course on paper, in the meeting hall of the Congress, it is easy to 'make' a revolution somewhere in airless space, free from all objective conditions whatever and to proclaim it the 'glorious deed of the Party alone'—without participation of the masses. In the final analysis however this is not even a revolutionary but just some sort of petty-bourgeois view. These 'Left stupidities' found their concrete and most incisive expression in the 'March action' in Germany and in the 'theory of the offensive.' It so happened that when they had to be done away with, you got it in the neck, back and sides. Accounts were settled on an international scale.

"Now, being a firmly united Party you must try to carry out in Germany the tactics approved by us. The so-called 'Peace Treaty' which was concluded between you and which we somehow patched up cannot by itself serve as a solid basis for that purpose. You will only be deceiving yourselves if you Lefts and Rights are not going to strive sincerely and honestly to act as a united party and follow a clear and definite political line. Despite all your unwillingness and disinclination you must absolutely rejoin the Central Committee of the Party. And don't you run away from there any more, even if you personally think that you have the right or even are obliged to do so. You have no other right than that of serving the Party and the proletariat at a difficult

juncture. Your duty now is to save the Party. I am making you personally responsible to see that no split occurs in the Party. In an extreme case the most that can be allowed is the secession of a small group. You must be strict with young comrades who have not yet had a thorough political training nor much practical experience and at the same time you must exercise great patience with them."

At this point I interrupted Lenin's lecture to me with the surprise question: "Do you have any suspicions on that score?" My lecturer burst into a laugh: "No, but I have had experience." He then continued:

"It is particularly important that you should rally the old-timers to our banner, those comrades who have already performed meritorious service in labour's cause. I am referring to such comrades as Adolf Hoffmann, Fritz Geyer, Däumig, Fries, and others. And even with them you must have patience and not immediately declare that the 'purity of communism' is in danger whenever they fail to formulate their communist ideas with accuracy and clarity. These comrades have the best intentions of becoming good Communists and you should help them become such. It goes without saying that you must make no concessions to survivals of reformist theories. Reformism should not be smuggled in under any guise whatever. But you must impose the necessary conditions on such comrades so as to make it impossible for them to speak or act otherwise than as Communists. Despite this you may and very likely will at times be disappointed. If you should happen to lose a comrade who goes wrong you will, by firm and wise handling, be able to keep two, three, even ten other comrades who came to you at the same time as he and developed into real Communists. Comrades like Adolf Hoffmann and Däumig bring experience and a certain degree of enlightenment with them

into the Party. They are above all live contacts connecting the Party with the broad masses of the working class, by which they are trusted. It is all a question of the masses. We should not frighten them either with 'Left stupidities' or 'Right fears.' We shall win the masses if we act unflinchingly in big things and in small. A difficult task is now in store for you in Germany: to pass the tactical test of how to win the masses. Don't disappoint us and don't let a split in the Party be your first step in this direction. Always have the masses in mind, Clara, and then you will accomplish the revolution, as we did: with the masses and through the masses."

* * *

After this farewell talk I twice went to Moscow but my stay was saddened by the circumstance that I was unable to speak with Lenin nor even to see him. A severe illness long riveted him to his bed, such a strong and sturdy man. But despite all evil rumours and predictions his health improved. When at the end of October 1922 I left to attend the Fourth World Congress of the Comintern I knew that I should see Lenin again. He had recuperated to such an extent that he was listed to deliver an address on the subject: "Five Years of the Russian Revolution and the Prospects of the World Revolution."* Could one think of a better jubilee celebration for the Russian Revolution than to have its brilliant leader, now recovered, speak about it to the representatives of the proletarian vanguard? The day after my arrival a comrade, all excited with joy and evidently "inherited" from the old regime, came to me and said:

"Vladimir Ilyich wants to pay you a visit, Comrade. That's Mr. Lenin; he will soon be here."

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* See V. I. Lenin, *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 33, pp. 380-394.—*Ed.*

This communication put me in such a flurry of excitement that the first few seconds the expression "Mr. Lenin" did not strike me as odd at all. I immediately jumped up from my desk and rushed to the door. Vladimir Ilyich was already there dressed in a grey-coloured jacket. His complexion was healthy and he looked as strong as he had been before his illness. While I laughed and cried from joy like a child Lenin made himself comfortable at the desk.

"Don't worry about me," he replied to my inquiries about his state of health. "I feel perfectly well and have regained my strength; I have even become 'sensible,' at least in the terminology of the medics. I work but take care of myself and strictly follow their orders. I don't want to be sick again, thank you. It's a nuisance, with all the things to do. Nadezhda Konstantinovna and Maria Ilyinichna must not have all those worries over again and all the work of nursing.... World history went on without me in Russia and the rest of the world. Our Party comrades worked very, very harmoniously together and that is the main thing. They were all overloaded with work and I am very glad to be able to lighten their load a bit."

Then Comrade Lenin questioned me about my sons with sincere solicitude, as always when we met, and at the end of our talk asked me for a report on the situation in Germany and the German Party. I informed him briefly, always bearing in mind that he was not to be fatigued. It seemed to me his request was made with the idea that I would link up with our talk during the Third Comintern Congress. He jokingly referred to my "psychology of leniency" at that time in Levi's case.

"Less psychology and more politics," he said. "By the way, in the discussion with Levi on Rosa's attitude toward the Russian Revolution you showed that you can

handle that sort of thing too. Your stern criticism of him was fully deserved. Levi eliminated himself faster and more thoroughly than his worst enemy could have done. Now he presents no danger to us whatever. Now, as far as we are concerned, he is only one of the members of the Social-Democratic Party, nothing more. And he cannot become anything else to us even if he is destined to play there a part of some importance. Anyhow, in view of that party's disintegration, that is not difficult. But for a close companion and friend of Rosa and Karl this is the most disgraceful end conceivable. Yes, the most disgraceful. For that very reason it was not to have been expected that his walk out and his betrayal could seriously shake or damage the Communist Party. There were some convulsions in small circles and some individuals decamped. The Party is sound, sound to the core. It is on the true road to becoming a mass party leading the revolutionary masses, to becoming the party of the German proletariat.... And how about your Opposition?" Lenin asked after some silence. "Has it finally learned how to conduct politics, and communist politics at that?"

I reported on the state of affairs, finishing with the statement that the "Berlin Opposition" intended to confront the Fourth International Congress with the task of revising the position of the preceding Congress and rescind it. "Back to the Second Congress!" was its watchword.

Lenin was amused by this "unexampled naiveness," as he literally expressed himself.

"The Left comrades take the Comintern for a true Penelope!" he exclaimed, laughing cheerfully. "But after all, our International does not weave in the day to unravel its work in the night. It cannot afford the luxury of making a step forward and immediately afterwards make a step backward. Have our comrades no eyes to see what

is going on before them? What has changed in the world situation that winning the masses should cease being our sole task? Such 'Lefts' are like the Bourbons: they learnt nothing and forgot nothing. As far as I have been able to make out, 'Left' criticism, besides criticizing the mistakes made in carrying out the tactics of the united front, conceals a desire to send the united-front tactics itself to blazes. The forthcoming Congress of the Comintern ought not to rescind but to confirm and strongly emphasize the decisions of the Third Congress as the basis of the Comintern's activity. Those decisions are a step forward in comparison with the work of the Second Congress. We must build further on the basis they constitute, otherwise we shall not transform ourselves into a party of the masses, into the leading, the revolutionary, the class party of the proletariat. Is it our aim to conquer power, to win the dictatorship of the workers, to accomplish the revolution, yes or no? If yes, then today, just as was the case yesterday, there is no way except the one pointed out by the Third Congress."

Then Lenin expressed his satisfaction with the actual but still slow process of revival of the Soviet Russia economy. He enumerated facts and cited figures which characterized this process.

"But of this I shall speak in my address," he said, breaking the thread of his thoughts. "The bit of time allowed me by my tyrannical doctors for visiting friends has already elapsed. You see how disciplined I am. Nevertheless, there still is something I must tell you, something of which you will be particularly glad. Just imagine, the other day I received a letter from a godforsaken little village." (Unfortunately I forgot its name, it's so difficult.) "About a hundred children from an orphanage wrote to me: 'Dear Grandad Lenin, we want to tell you that we are getting to be very good. We are study-

ing hard. We already know how to read and write well. We are doing many good things. We wash ourselves every morning and wash our hands before eating. We want to please our teacher. He does not love us when we are dirty,' etc. This shows you, dear Clara, that we are chalking up successes in all fields, and serious successes, too. We are learning to be cultured; we wash, even daily. Just watch how with us even the children in the villages take part in the re-creation of Soviet Russia. Under these conditions have we any reason to be afraid that victory will not be ours?"

Here Lenin laughed heartily; he was as gay as he used to be. His laughter had the ring of a man with a big, kind heart and with confidence in victory.

A few days later I heard Lenin's address on the Russian Revolution. I was struck with amazement. It was the report of one who, restored in health, was imbued with the iron will to live, with the desire to create, to build a new social life—the words of one who has recovered, but to whom the bony, merciless hand of death has already been outstretched. Alongside this last historic action, and of equal value with it, there abides in my soul the unfading memory of the end of the last personal talk I had with Lenin, not counting exchanges of opinion at casual meetings. Those words have become woven into a single fabric with my first "non-political" talk with him. Here as well as there it was Lenin in his full stature, the Lenin who was able to see the great thing in a little thing, who could grasp the inner connection between the little and the great and assess it; the Lenin who in the spirit of Marx's teaching perceived close mutual connection between public education and revolution; the Lenin to whom public education meant revolution and revolution—public education; the Lenin who ardently and unselfishly loved the creative masses of the working people, especially children, the future of these

masses, the future of communism; the Lenin whose heart was as great as his mind and his will, and who therefore could become the great unexcelled leader of the proletariat. Lenin, powerful and bold, achieved victory because he was permeated with the one idea: love for the creative masses, confidence in them, faith in the greatness and magnificence of the cause to which he dedicated his life, faith in its triumph. That is why he could work historical miracles. Lenin moved mountains.

January 1924

FROM MY MEMORANDUM BOOK

Comrade Lenin repeatedly discussed with me the problem of women's rights. He obviously attributed great importance to the women's movement because it was to him so essential a part of the mass movement in general that under certain conditions it might become its decisive sector. He took it for granted that for a Communist full social equality of women was fundamental, absolutely beyond dispute.

We had our first lengthy talk on this subject in the autumn of 1920, in Lenin's big study in the Kremlin. Lenin sat at his desk, which was covered with books and papers in evidence of his voracious appetite for study and for work, but without the disorder associated with genius.

"We certainly must set up a powerful international women's movement on a clear and definite theoretical basis," he began our talk after greeting me. "There can be no good practice without Marxist theory; that's clear. We Communists need utmost clarity of principle in this question too. We must draw a sharp line between us and all other parties. True enough, our Second International Congress unfortunately did not succeed in discussing the question of woman. It posed the question but did not have time to take a definite stand. The thing got stuck

in the committee stage. The committee is to work out a resolution, theses and a concrete line but has made little progress so far. You should help it."

I had already heard from others what Lenin was now telling me and I expressed my amazement. I was full of enthusiasm about everything Russian women had done during the revolution and what they were doing now in its defence and further development. As for the status and activity of women in the Bolshevik Party, I thought that in this respect it was nothing short of exemplary. It alone supplies the international communist women's movement with valuable trained and tested forces at the same time serving as a great historical model.

"That is true, quite true," Lenin remarked with a faint smile. "In Petrograd, here in Moscow, and in cities and industrial centres situated far from them, proletarian womanhood showed up splendidly during the revolution. We would not have won without them. Or would scarcely have won. That is my opinion. What courage they displayed and how courageous they are also today! Imagine the suffering and privation they are enduring. But they are holding out because they want to defend the Soviets, because they want freedom and communism. Yes, our working women are magnificent, they are class-conscious fighters. They are worthy of our admiration and love. In general it must be acknowledged that even the ladies of the Constitutional Democrats [Party of the big bourgeoisie] in Petrograd displayed greater courage during the fighting against us than the military cadets.

"It's true that we have reliable, intelligent and tireless women in our Party. They are able to hold responsible posts in Soviets, Executive Committees, People's Commissariats, and public offices. Many of them work day and night either in the Party or among the worker and peasant masses or in the Red Army. That is of great value to us. This is important for women all over the

world, as it is evidence of the capacity of women, of the great value of the work they do for society. The first proletarian dictatorship is really paving the way to complete social equality of women. It uproots more prejudice than piles of feminist literature. However, in spite of all this we do not yet have a communist international women's movement and we must have one at any price. We must proceed at once to set up such a movement. Without such a movement the work of our International and of its parties is incomplete and never will be complete. And our revolutionary work must be fulfilled in its entirety. Tell me, please, how is communist work getting on abroad?"

I told him all the information I could gather, with connections between the parties affiliated to the Comintern as poor and irregular as they were at the time. Lenin listened attentively, slightly bent forward, with no signs of boredom, impatience or fatigue, keenly following even details of secondary interest. I do not know anyone who was a better listener than he, who could put all this in order and establish general contact faster than he. That was evident from the short and always very precise questions he asked from time to time about what I told him, and from his way of returning again and again to particulars of my narrative. Lenin then made some brief notes.

I naturally spoke in greatest detail about the state of affairs in Germany. I told him that Rosa attached great importance to drawing the widest masses of women into the revolutionary struggle. When the Communist Party was founded Rosa insisted that a newspaper dealing with the women's movement should be published. A day and a half before he was murdered Leo Jogisches discussed with me the Party's plan of work. It was to be our last meeting. He gave me various tasks to perform, among them a plan for carrying on organizational work among

the working women. At its first underground conference the Party took up this question. The trained and tested women agitators and leaders that had become prominent before and during the war had almost all remained in the Social-Democratic parties of both complexions and kept the agitated masses of working women under their sway. However, among the women too a small nucleus of energetic, self-sacrificing comrades had already been formed, who, I stated, were taking part in all the work and in the struggle of our Party. On the other hand, the Party itself also already organized planned activity among the working women. Of course all this was merely a start, but a good start.

"Not bad, not at all bad," Lenin said. "The energy, self-sacrifice and inspiration so frequently seen among communist women, their courage and good sense during the illegal and semi-legal periods, augur well for the development of our work. The winning of the masses and the organization of demonstrations are valuable factors for making the Party and its might grow. But how about getting a clear understanding of the fundamentals of this question and teaching them to the masses—how are you getting along in this respect? After all, that is the thing that counts most in work among the masses. I cannot remember at the moment who said: 'It takes inspiration to do great deeds.' We and the working people of the whole world still have to do really great deeds. Well then, what inspires your comrades, the proletarian women of Germany? What about their proletarian class-consciousness? Are their interests, their activity concentrated on the political demands of the moment? On what are they focussing their thoughts?

"I heard strange things on this topic from Russian and German comrades. I must tell you about this. I was informed that in Hamburg a talented communist woman is getting out a newspaper for prostitutes and is trying to

organize them for the revolutionary struggle. Now Rosa, a true Communist, acted and felt like a human being when she wrote a certain article in defence of a prostitute who had landed in jail for violating a police regulation connected with her sorry profession. They deserve to be pitied, these double victims of bourgeois society. Victims, firstly, of its accursed system of property and, secondly, of its accursed moral hypocrisy. That is clear. Only a coarse-grained, short-sighted person could forget this. However, to understand this is one thing. But it is quite another thing—how shall I put it?—to organize the prostitutes as a special revolutionary shock detachment and publish a trade-union paper for them. Are there no industrial working women left in Germany who need organizing, who ought to have their newspaper, who should be enlisted in your struggle? Here we have morbid deviation. This strongly reminds me of a literary vogue that made a sweet madonna out of every prostitute. True enough, the root of the matter was sound there too: social sympathy, indignation against the moral hypocrisy of the honourable bourgeoisie. But the healthy principle was subjected to bourgeois corrosion and became degenerate. In general prostitution even in our country will still require the adoption of many measures difficult to carry out. Return the prostitute to productive work; find her a place in the social economy! That's what it all comes down to. But with the state of our economy as it is and all other present conditions figured in, it is a difficult and complicated matter. Here you have a piece of the woman problem that confronts us, after the conquest of political power by the proletariat, in all its magnitude demanding solution. It will still create much trouble, even for us in Soviet Russia.

"But let us return to your special case in Germany. The Party ought under no circumstances to look calmly upon such improper acts of its members. It causes confusion

and dissipates our forces. And what have you yourself been doing to stop this?"

But before I could answer Lenin continued:

"The enumeration of your sins, Clara, is not yet complete. I have furthermore been told that at evenings arranged for reading and discussion with working women, sex and marriage problems are the main topics taken up. These subjects receive most attention in your political instruction and educational work. I could not believe my ears when I heard that. The first state of proletarian dictatorship fights the counterrevolutionaries of the entire world. The situation in Germany demands the greatest unity of all proletarian revolutionary forces to be able to withstand the constantly increasing pressure of the counterrevolution. And at such a time active communist women ponder over sex problems and the forms of marriage past, present and future! They consider it their foremost duty to enlighten working women on questions in this sphere. It is said that a pamphlet written by a Vienna communist authoress on the sex question enjoys the greatest popularity. What rot that booklet is! Whatever is right in it the workers read long ago in Bebel. Only not in the tedious, cut-and-dried form found in the pamphlet in question but in the form of gripping agitation full of attacks on bourgeois society. The mention in the pamphlet of Freud's hypothesis is designed to give it a scientific veneer, but the thing is nothing but a miserable botch. Freud's theory has now become some sort of fad. I have no confidence in sex theories expounded in various articles, scientific papers, pamphlets, and the like—briefly, in that specific literature which has sprung up so luxuriantly on the dung heap of bourgeois society. I do not trust those who are constantly and persistently absorbed in problems of sex, like that Indian fakir is in the contemplation of his navel. It seems to me that this superabundance of sex theories, which for the most part

are mere hypotheses, and frequently arbitrary ones at that, is a result of personal wants. It springs from the desire to justify one's own abnormal or excessive sex life before bourgeois morality and to plead for tolerance towards oneself. This veiled respect for bourgeois morality is as repugnant to me as is the delving with relish into questions of sex. No matter how rebellious and revolutionary this avocation may be made to appear, it in the long run is thoroughly bourgeois anyhow. It is an avocation particularly favoured by intellectuals and social strata akin to them. There is no room for it in the Party, among the class-conscious fighting proletariat.

I have dropped the remark that where private property and the bourgeois social order prevail problems of sex and marriage greatly harass the lives of women of all social classes and strata. For women the war and its consequences have brought to an unusually acute stage the conflicts and sufferings that formerly existed precisely in the sphere of sex relations. Problems formerly concealed from women have now been laid bare. To this has been added the atmosphere of incipient revolution. The world of old emotions and thoughts is cracking up. Erstwhile social connections are weakening and tearing. Embryos of new, still unformed ideological premises for relations between man and man are breaking into existence. Interest in these problems is explained by the need to size up the situation, by the need of a new orientation. Here one can also sense a reaction against the distortions and the deceits of bourgeois society. Modification of the form of marriage and of the family in the course of history, in their dependence on economics, is a convenient way of eradicating from the mind of the working woman her preconceived notion that bourgeois society is eternal. The historico-critical attitude toward the bourgeois system must now be superseded by an irrevocable dismemberment of it, by an exposure of its essence and of the conse-

quences it calls forth, including the branding of false sex morality. All roads lead to Rome. Every Marxist analysis of an important part of the ideological superstructure of society, of an outstanding social phenomenon, must lead to an analysis of the bourgeois system as a whole and of its basis—private property in the means of production; and every such analysis should lead to the conclusion that "Carthage must be destroyed."

Lenin nodded with a smile.

"Yes, that's how it is! You defend your comrades and your Party like a lawyer. What you say is of course true. But that can at best serve as an excuse but not as a justification of the mistake committed in Germany. A mistake is a mistake. Can you assure me in all sincerity that during reading and discussion time questions of sex and marriage are discussed from the point of view of consistent, vital historical materialism? After all, this presupposes deep, many-sided knowledge, exact Marxist mastery of a vast amount of material. What forces do you have today for that job? If you had such forces it could not have happened that a pamphlet like the one we spoke about should be used for instruction in evening circles for reading and discussion. This pamphlet is being recommended and disseminated instead of being criticized. Where in the long run will this unsatisfactory, un-Marxist discussion of the problem lead to? To the point where sex and marriage problems will no longer be taken to be only parts of the main social problem. On the contrary, the great social problem will itself begin to be considered a part, an appendage to the sex problem. The main thing recedes into the background as being secondary. That not only prevents clarity in this question. It befogs thought in general, obscures the class-consciousness of the working women.

"One more observation that may not be superfluous. Solomon the Wise told us there is a time for everything.

Tell me, please, is this the time to keep working women busy for whole months at a stretch with such things as how to love or be loved, how to woo and be wooed. And of course how it was done in the past, and how in the present and future, and how among the various peoples. And that is proudly styled historical materialism. Nowadays all thoughts of working women should be riveted on the proletarian revolution, which will lay the foundation, among other things, of a real change in the conditions of marriage and sex relations. But at the present time we must give first attention to other problems than the form of marriage prevalent among the Australian Negroes and marriage within the family in primitive times. As hitherto, history has placed on the order of the day for the German proletarian the problem of Soviets, of the Versailles Treaty and its influence on the life of the masses of women; the problem of unemployment, of falling wages, of taxes and many other things. To be brief, I remain of the opinion that this sort of political and social education of working women is wrong, absolutely wrong. How could you keep quiet about it? You should have used the weight of your authority against this sort of thing."

I explained to my heatedly arguing friend that I had never failed to criticize on every proper occasion, to voice my objections to the leading women comrades and to come out against such doings in various places. But, as he very well knew, no prophet is honoured in his own country or in his own house. By my criticism I had drawn upon myself the suspicion that "in my mind survivals of Social-Democratic attitudes and old-fashioned philistinism were still strongly entrenched." However in the end this criticism had its effect. Sex and marriage no longer loom largest in circles or at discussion evenings.

Lenin resumed the thread of his thoughts.

"Yes, yes; I know that," he said, "I too am badly suspected of philistinism on that account. But I don't get excited over that. Yellow-beaked fledglings who have just about been hatched from their bourgeois-tainted eggs are all so terribly clever. We have to reconcile ourselves to this without mending our ways. The youth movement is also sick from the modern treatment of the sex problem and the excessive interest in it."

Lenin emphasized the word "modern" with an ironical, deprecating gesture.

"I was also told that sex problems are a favourite subject in your youth organizations too, and that there are hardly enough lecturers on this subject. This is an outrage particularly damaging, particularly dangerous, to the youth movement. It can easily lead to sexual excesses, to overstimulation of sex life and to squandering the health and strength of the youth. You must combat such occurrences too. There is no lack of points of contact between the youth movement and the women's movement. Our communist women must everywhere carry on planned work together with the youth. This elevates and transposes them from the world of individual motherhood to the world of social motherhood. Assistance must be given to every awakening of social life and activity of women to enable them to outgrow the narrowness of their philistine, individualistic psychology centred on home and family. But this is incidental.

"In our country too a considerable part of the youth is zealously engaged in 'revising bourgeois conceptions and morals' in the sex question. I must add, a considerable part of our best boys and girls, of our really most promising youth. Things are precisely as you have indicated just now. In the atmosphere created by the aftermath of war and incipient revolution old ideological values tumble, losing their power of restraint. New values crystallize slowly, by struggle. Views on relations be-

tween man and man, and relations between man and woman, are becoming revolutionized; feelings and thoughts are also becoming revolutionized. New delimitations are being set up between the rights of the individual and the rights of the collective body, and hence also the duties of the individual. This is the slow and often very painful process of passing away and coming into being. All this applies also to the field of sex relations, marriage, family. The decay, putrescence, filth of bourgeois marriage with its difficult dissolution, its liberty for the husband and bondage for the wife, and its detestably false sex morality and relations fill the best representatives of humanity with the utmost loathing.

"The laws on marriage and the family that exist in the bourgeois state enhance the evil and sharpen the conflicts. This is the yoke of 'sacred private property.' It sanctifies all this venality, baseness, muck. All the rest is brought to completion by the conventional deception of 'respectable' bourgeois society. People revolt against the prevailing abominations and perversions. And in this epoch, when mighty states are crumbling to dust, when old relations of domination are being torn asunder, when a whole social world is beginning to perish, the sensations of individual man undergo quick modification. The stimulating thirst for variety of enjoyment readily acquires irresistible force. Marriage forms and sexual union in the bourgeois sense no longer satisfy. In the sphere of marriage and sexual relations a revolution is approaching in keeping with the proletarian revolution. Naturally the exceedingly tangled interlacement of questions thus brought to the fore deeply engrosses both women and the youth. Both the former and the latter suffer greatly from the messy state of sex relations. The youth is up in arms against this with the impetuosity characteristic of it. That is understandable. Nothing could be more false than to begin to preach to the youth monastic asceticism and

the sanctity of filthy bourgeois morals. However one would hardly say it was a good thing that in these years sex problems, violently pushed into the limelight by natural causes, were becoming the central feature of youth psychology. The consequences are sometimes nothing short of fatal.

"Youth's changed attitude to questions of sexual life is of course based, 'as a matter of principle,' on theory. Many call their position 'revolutionary' and 'communist.' They sincerely believe that this is so. I, an old man, am not impressed by this. Although I am anything but a morose ascetic, yet quite frequently this so-called 'new sex life' of the youth—and often enough of grown-ups too—seems to me purely bourgeois, seems to me to be just a variety of the good old bourgeois brothel. All this has not the faintest resemblance to free love, as we Communists understand it. You of course have heard about the famous theory that in communist society satisfying one's sexual desire and craving for love is as simple and trivial as drinking a glass of water. Our youth has gone mad, absolutely mad, over this 'glass-of-water theory.' It has proved fatal to many a boy and girl. Its devotees assert that it is a Marxist theory. Thanks for such Marxism, which deduces all phenomena and all changes in the ideological superstructure of society directly, straight and unfailingly from this one and only source—the economic basis. This is not at all such a simple matter. A certain Frederick Engels long ago established this truth, which concerns historical materialism.

"I do not consider the famous 'glass-of-water' theory as Marxist at all and besides think it is anti-social. What manifests itself in sex life is not only the contribution made by nature but also an admixture derived from culture, be it on a high level or low. Engels pointed out in his *Origin of the Family* how significant it was that simple sexual inclination developed into individual sex love

and became refined. Relations between the sexes are not simply a game between social economics and a physical want. To strive to reduce changes in these relations, taken in isolation from their general connection with the whole of ideology, directly to the economic basis of society would not be Marxism but rationalism. Of course thirst must be quenched. But will a normal person under normal conditions lie down in the gutter and drink from a puddle? Or even from a glass the edge of which has been touched by dozens of lips? But the social aspect is the most important. Drinking water is really an individual matter. But in love-making two take part and a third, a new life, comes into being. Herein lies a social interest; a duty to the collective body arises.

"As a Communist I do not like the 'glass-of-water' theory in the least despite its beautiful label: 'emancipated love.' Moreover, it is neither new nor communistic. Perhaps you will recall that this theory was disseminated in fine literature about the middle of the past century as the 'emancipation of the heart.' In bourgeois practice it was turned into the emancipation of the body. It was preached with much more talent than now. How things are with the practice of it I am unable to judge.

"Not that I want my criticism to breed asceticism. That never occurred to me. Communism ought to bring with it not asceticism but joy of life and good cheer called forth, among other things, by a life replete with love. However, in my opinion the plethora of sex life observable today brings neither joy of life nor cheerfulness, but on the contrary diminishes them. In revolutionary times this is bad, very bad, indeed.

"The youth is particularly in need of joy of life and cheerfulness. Healthy sports: gymnastics, swimming, excursions, physical exercise of every description; also a diversity of intellectual pursuits: teaching, criticism, research; and all of this in combination, as far as possible.

That will mean more to the youth than eternal lectures and discussions on sex problems and so-called 'utilization of life.' *Mens sana in corpore sano.* Neither monk nor Don Juan nor yet a German philistine to act the part of a mean. After all, you know young Comrade XYZ. A handsome, highly gifted youth. Yet I am afraid that in spite of all he will never amount to anything. He has one love affair after another. No good will come of this, neither for the political struggle nor for the revolution. Nor will I vouch for the reliability or staunchness in the struggle of women whose personal romance is intertwined with politics, or for men who run after every petticoat, and allow themselves to be mixed up with every slip of a girl. No, no; that does not go well together with revolution."

Lenin jumped up, striking the table with his hand, and walked a few steps up and down the room.

"The revolution demands of the masses and the individual concentration, the straining of every nerve. It does not tolerate orgiastic states like those habitual with the decadent heroes and heroines of a d'Annunzio. Laxity in sexual matters is bourgeois; it is a sign of degeneration. The proletariat is an ascending class. It requires no intoxicant to stun or excite it. It has no need of intoxication either by sexual looseness or by means of alcohol. It does not dare and does not want to forget the vileness, filth, and barbarity of capitalism. It derives its strongest stimulants to struggle from the position of its class, from the communist ideal. What it needs is clarity, clarity, and once more—clarity. Therefore, I repeat: there must be no weakness, no waste or destruction of energy. Self-possession, self-discipline are not slavery; they are necessary also in love. But excuse me, Clara. I have strayed far from the point at which our conversation started. Why didn't you call me to order? Alarm set me talking. I am very anxious about the future of our youth. It is part and parcel of the revolution. And if harmful phenomena of bour-

geois society begin to spread to the world of revolution, like the widely ramified roots of certain weeds, it is best to combat this in time. The questions touched upon are also part of the women's problem."

Lenin spoke with great vivacity and conviction. I felt that every word came from his innermost soul. This was confirmed by the expression of his face. Energetic gestures at times punctuated his thoughts. I was astonished at the way he paid so much attention to isolated happenings and analyzed them right along with highly important political problems. And not only happenings in Soviet Russia but also in capitalist countries. Like the splendid Marxist that he was, he apprehended the individual phenomenon wherever and in whatever form it manifested itself, in its connection with the large, the whole, evaluating its significance for that whole. His will, his whole life had only one purpose, unshakable like a rock—acceleration of the revolution, the cause of the masses. He estimated everything in terms of the impact of this acceleration on the conscious fighting forces, both national and international, of the revolution, inasmuch as his mind, while taking into account the historically evolved specific features of each separate country at each separate stage of its development, always visioned a single, indivisible world-wide proletarian revolution.

"How I regret, Comrade Lenin," I exclaimed, "that your words have not been heard by hundreds and thousands of people. Me you do not have to convince; you know that. But how important it is that friend and enemy alike should hear your opinion!"

Lenin laughed good-naturedly.

"Some day perhaps I shall speak or write on the questions we have gone over. But later, not now. Now all our time and strength must be concentrated on something else. There are more important and more difficult jobs to do. The struggle to retain and strengthen Soviet power

is not yet over by far. We must try to stomach the outcome of the Polish War as best we can. Wrangel is still holding on in the South. True, I am firmly convinced that we shall cope with him. This will make the British and French imperialists and their diminutive vassals hesitate. The most difficult part of our task is still ahead—restoration. While this process is going on problems concerning sex relations, marriage and the family will gain importance. Meanwhile you must fight when and where there is need. You should not allow these questions to be handled in any other but the Marxist way or to serve as the basis for disorganizing deviations and distortions. Now at last I have reached the point of discussing your work."

Lenin consulted his watch.

"The time at my disposal," he said, "has already half expired. I chatted too long. You are to write the leading theses on communist work among women. I know your principled approach and practical experience. Therefore our talk about this work will be brief. So you better get busy on the job. What do you think the theses should look like?"

I gave him a succinct account of my ideas. Lenin nodded a few times approvingly without interrupting. When I was through I looked at him questioningly.

"Right," he remarked. "It would also be a good thing if you were to address a meeting of responsible women Party workers on this subject and afterwards to discuss it. Too bad Comrade Inessa[7] is not here. She is sick and has left for the Caucasus. After the discussion write the theses. A committee will look them over and the Executive Committee will make the final decision. I shall take up only some of the main points, on which I fully share your views. They seem to me important also for our current agitational and propaganda work since we want to prepare successful demonstrations and victorious battles.

"The theses must strongly emphasize that true emancipation of women can be achieved only through communism. You must thoroughly analyze the question of the insoluble connection between the status of women as human beings and members of society, and the private ownership of the instruments of production. This will provide a reliable line of demarcation separating us from the bourgeois movement for the 'emancipation of women.' We thereby also lay the groundwork for examining the women's question as part of the social, the working-class question and thus will make it possible to knit it firmly together with the proletarian class struggle and the revolution. The women's communist movement itself must be a mass movement, a part of the general mass movement; and not only part of the movement of the proletarians but of all the exploited and oppressed, of all victims of capitalism. Herein lies the significance of the women's movement for the class struggle of the proletariat and its historic creative task: the creation of communist society. We have every right to be proud that the flower of revolutionary womanhood is to be found in our Party, in the Comintern. But this is not yet decisive. We must enlist the vast millions of working women of town and country in our struggle, and particularly in the communist reconstruction of society. There can be no real mass movement without the women.

"From our ideological conceptions organizational measures are derived. No separate organizations for communist women! Communists are equal members of the Party, whether they are men or women, and they have the same rights and duties. There can be no difference of opinion here. However we must not shut our eyes to facts. The Party must have its organs: working groups, commissions, committees, sections or whatever else they will be called. Their special tasks will be: to rouse the masses of the women, bring them into contact with the

Party and keep them under its influence. This of course requires that we should carry on systematic work among these masses. We must teach the women that have been shaken out of their passivity, recruit them and arm them for the proletarian class struggle under the leadership of the Communist Party. I have in view not only proletarian women who work in mills or cook the family meal. I also have in mind the peasant women and the women of the various sections of the lower middle class. All of them are also victims of capitalism and have become such even more ever since the war. The lack of interest in politics and the otherwise anti-social and backward psychology of all these masses of women, the narrow scope of their activities and the whole pattern of their lives are pertinent facts for you. It would be senseless not to use them, absolutely senseless. We must have our own bodies for work among them, and special methods of agitation, as well as various forms of organization. This is not bourgeois 'feminism'; this is practical revolutionary expediency."

I told Lenin that his arguments strongly supported my position. Many comrades, very good ones too, strenuously fought the idea that the Party should set up special bodies for planned work among women at large. They called this a return to Social-Democratic traditions, to the notorious "emancipation of women" movement. They claimed that once communist parties fully recognize in principle the equality of women they should carry on work among the working people without introducing any divisions. The approach to men and to women should be alike. Any attempt to take into consideration the circumstances noted by him in regard to agitation and organization ought to be branded as opportunism, as treachery and a renunciation of principles by the advocates of the contrary view.

"This is nothing new; moreover, it is wholly inconclusive," Lenin objected. "Do not let anybody mislead you. Why are there nowhere as many women in the Party as men, not even in Soviet Russia? Why are so few working women organized in trade unions? These facts are apt to make you stop and think. The denial that there is any need for special bodies for our work among the masses of women is a manifestation of the exceedingly principled and highly radical position taken by our 'dear friends' of the Communist Labour Party.[8] They opine that only one form of organization should exist: a workers' union. I know about that. Principles are invoked by many revolutionary-minded but confused heads 'whenever a shortage of understanding occurs,' i.e., whenever reason refuses to perceive sober facts that ought to be heeded. How do such guardians of the 'purity of principles' cope with the necessities imposed upon us by history in our revolutionary policy? All these arguments are blown to smithereens by inexorable necessity: we cannot make the dictatorship of the proletariat a reality without the millions of women, we cannot without them engage in communist construction. We must find a way to them and must do much studying and probing in order to find that way.

"It is therefore absolutely right that we should be putting forward demands for the benefit of women. This is not a minimum programme, not a programme of reforms in the Social-Democratic spirit, in the spirit of the Second International. This is not an admission that we believe in the eternity or even the prolonged existence of the bourgeoisie and its state. Nor is it an attempt to tranquillize the masses of women with reforms and divert them from the path of revolutionary struggle. There is nothing in common here with reformist bamboozling. Our demands are merely the practical outcome of the dire need and

shameful humiliation which weak and unenfranchised woman must bear under the bourgeois system.

"We thus testify to the fact that we know these needs, feel the oppression of the women, feel the privileged position of the men and hate—yes, hate and want to obliterate everything that oppresses and harasses the working woman, the wife of the working man, the peasant woman, the wife of the little man, and even in many respects the woman from the wealthy classes. The rights and social measures we demand of bourgeois society for women are proof that we understand the needs of women and will pay attention to them under the proletarian dictatorship. Not of course by adopting soporific measures of tutelage but like revolutionaries, by calling upon the women to take a hand themselves as equals in the rebuilding of the economy and the ideological superstructure."

I assured Lenin that I was of the same opinion but that this point of view would undoubtedly encounter opposition. Uncertain, timid minds would reject it as "dangerous opportunism." Nor could it be denied that our present demands for women might be incorrectly understood and interpreted.

"Well, what of it?" Lenin exclaimed, somewhat irritated. "We take this risk in everything we say and do. If we are going to let such fear keep us from doing what is advisable and necessary we may simply become metamorphosed into Indian stylites. Don't stir, only do not stir, or we shall come tumbling down from the high style of our principles! In our case not only what we demand matters but also the way we do it. I believe I made this sufficiently plain. Naturally we must not in our propaganda make a fetish out of our demands for women. No, we must fight, now for these and now for those demands, depending on the existing conditions, always linking them up of course with the general interests of the proletariat.

"Naturally every tussle sets us at loggerheads with the respectable bourgeois clique and its no less respectable reformist lackeys. This compels the latter either to fight hand in hand with us, under our leadership, which they do not want, or to drop their mask. Thus the struggle brings us into bold relief, makes clear our communist face. It evokes confidence in us among the masses of women, who feel they are exploited, enslaved, crushed underfoot by the domination of the men, by the power enjoyed by their employers and bourgeois society as a whole. Betrayed and abandoned by all, the working women begin to realize that they must fight together with us. Must we on top of this also assure each other that the struggle for women's rights must be linked up with our principal aim: the conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat? This at present is and will continue to be our alpha and omega. That is clear, absolutely clear. But the broad masses of working women will not feel an irresistible desire to share with us the struggle for state power if we constantly harp on this one demand, even if we blare it forth on the trumpets of Jericho. No, absolutely no! We must politically combine our appeal in the minds of the female masses at large with the sufferings, needs and wishes of the working women. They all ought to know that to them the proletarian dictatorship means: complete equality of rights with men both under the law and in practice, in the family, state and society, and that it also spells the annihilation of the power of the bourgeoisie."

"Soviet Russia is proof of this," I exclaimed; "it will serve us as a great example!"

Lenin went on:

"Soviet Russia is bringing our demands for women to the fore in a new light. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat they are no longer an object of struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie, but serve as bricks for the

building of communist society. This shows to the women on the other side of the border the decisive importance of the conquest of power by the proletariat. The difference between their status here and there must be exactlly specified so that you may have the women in their mass with you in the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat. The mobilization of the female masses, carried out with a clear understanding of principles and on a firm organizational basis, is a question of the life and victory of the Communist Party. But let us not deceive ourselves. Our national sections still do not have a correct understanding of this question. They remain passive and adopt a waiting attitude with regard to the task of creating a mass movement of the working women under communist leadership. They do not understand that developing such a mass movement and leading it constitutes a most important part of all Party activity, even half of the general Party work. Their occasional recognition of the need and value of a powerful communist women's movement with a clear aim is but a Platonic acknowledgment and not a steady Party assignment or duty.

"They look upon agitational work and propaganda among the masses of women and upon the task of awakening and revolutionizing them as upon something of secondary importance, as a matter that concerns women Communists alone. The latter are rebuked because the matter does not move ahead faster and more energetically. This is wrong, wrong from the bottom up! Present-day separatism and equality of women is *à la rebours*, as the French say, i.e., equality of women inside out. What is at the bottom of the incorrect position of our national sections? (I am not speaking of Soviet Russia.) In the final analysis nothing other than underestimation of women and their work. That's just what it is. Unfortunately it may still be asserted of many of our comrades: 'Scratch a Communist and you will find a philistine.' Of

course you have to scratch a sensitive spot—his psychological reaction to women. Could there be any more palpable proof than the common sight of a man calmly watching a woman wear herself out with trivial, monotonous work that exhausts her and consumes her time and strength, such as housework; watching her horizon shrinking at this work, her mind growing dull, her heartbeat faint, her will weak? I am not referring of course to bourgeois ladies who dump all housework, including the care of children, on hired help. What I say applies to the vast majority of women, including the wives of workers, even if these wives spend the whole day at the factory and themselves earn money.

"Very few husbands, even in proletarian circles, think of how greatly they could lighten the burdens and worries of their wives or relieve them entirely if they would lend a hand in this 'women's work.' But no, that would be against the 'rights and dignity of the husband.' He demands that he have rest and comfort. The domestic life of woman is a daily sacrifice of self in a thousand insignificant trifles. The ancient rights of her husband, her lord and master, continue to assert themselves in concealed form. His slave objectively takes revenge of him, also in concealed form: woman's backwardness, her lack of understanding of her husband's revolutionary ideals is a drag on his good spirits and determination to fight. They are the tiny worms which imperceptibly, slowly but surely gnaw and undermine. I know the life of the workers, and not only from books. Our communist work among the masses of women and our political work in general includes considerable work in the upbringing of men. We must expunge, uproot the old slave-owner's point of view. Both in the Party and among the masses. That is one of our political tasks just as much as is the urgently necessary formation of ■ staff composed of comrades—

men and women—who have received a thorough theoretical and practical training for carrying out and moving along the Party work among the labouring masses of women."

To my question about present-day conditions in Soviet Russia Lenin gave the following answer:

"The government of the proletarian dictatorship, of course in conjunction with the Communist Party and the trade unions, bends every effort to overcome the backward views of men and women and thus deprive the old, non-communist psychology of its very foundation. Is there any need to mention that here men and women have been made absolutely equal before the law? A sincere desire to give effect to this equality may be noted in all spheres. We are enlisting women into the work of Soviet economy, administration, legislation and government. We are opening to them all courses and educational institutions to improve their professional and social training. We are setting up public kitchens and dining rooms, laundries and repair shops, crèches, kindergartens, children's homes and training institutions of every kind. In brief, we are seriously carrying out the requirement of our programme to shift the functions of management and upbringing in the individual household to society. In this way woman is being freed from her old domestic slavery and her dependence on her husband. She is offered every opportunity to engage in social activity in accordance with her capabilities and inclinations. Children are offered surroundings more favourable for their development than would await them at home. We have the most progressive female labour legislation in the world. It is put into effect by authorized representatives of organized labour. We set up maternity homes, mother-and-child homes, organize consultation rooms for mothers, courses on nursing children and care of young children, exhibitions on care for mother and child, and the like. We are making

every effort to provide for needy and unemployed women.

"We know quite well that all this is still little in comparison with the needs of the masses of working women, that this is still absolutely insufficient for their real emancipation. And yet it is an immense stride forward when we consider what there was in tsarist, capitalist Russia. It is also much as compared with the little that is being done where capitalism still holds undivided sway. This is a good beginning. The course taken is true and we shall elaborate it consistently, with all the energy at our command. You abroad may rest assured of that. With every-day's existence of the Soviet state it becomes clearer that we cannot get ahead without the millions of women. Just imagine what this means in a country where a good 80% of the population are peasants. Small peasant economy implies individual housekeeping and chaining women to it. You will have it much better and easier by far in this respect than we are having it, provided of course that your proletarian masses become conscious of their objective historical maturity for the seizure of power, for the revolution. We shall not give way to despair. Our forces grow as our difficulties increase. Practical necessity will impel us to find new ways of emancipating the masses of women. In union with the Soviet state comradely solidarity will accomplish wonders. Of course comradely solidarity in the communist, not bourgeois, sense in which it is preached by the reformists, whose revolutionary enthusiasm has evaporated like the smell of cheap vinegar. Personal initiative, which grows into collective activity and fuses with it, should go hand in glove with comradely solidarity. Under the proletarian dictatorship the emancipation of women by making communism a reality will take place also in the countryside. In this respect I expect much from the electrification of our industry and agriculture. That's a grand scheme. The difficulties in

its way are great, monstrously great. To overcome them the powerful forces latent in the masses must be unbound and trained. Millions of women must take part in this."

During the last ten minutes there had twice been a knock but Lenin had continued to speak. Now he opened the door and shouted:

"I'm coming right now!"

Turning in my direction he added, smilingly:

"You know, Clara, I am going to take advantage of the fact that I was conversing with a woman and will give renowned female loquacity as the excuse for my lateness. Although this time, as a matter of fact, it was the man and not the woman who did most of the talking. In general I must attest that you are really a conscientious listener. Perhaps it was just this that made me talk so much."

With this jocular remark Lenin helped me to put my coat on.

"You should dress more warmly," he suggested solicitously. "Moscow is not Stuttgart. You need somebody to look after you. Don't catch cold. Good-bye."

A firm handshake and he was gone.

* * *

My next talk with Lenin on the women's movement took place about a fortnight later. Lenin came to see me. As almost always, his visit was unexpected, impromptu, and occurred during an intermission in the gigantic work that the leader of the victorious revolution was carrying on. Lenin looked very tired and worried. Wrangel had not yet been decisively defeated and the question of the food supply for the big cities faced the Soviet Government like an inexorable sphinx.

Lenin asked how the theses were coming along. I told him that a big commission had been in session at which all prominent communist women then in Moscow were present and spoke. The theses were ready and were now to be submitted to a small committee. Lenin pointed out that we should strive to have the Third World Congress examine the problem with due thoroughness.[9] This fact alone would overcome the prejudices of many comrades. Anyhow it was the communist women who ought to push this thing in the first place, and they ought to make a good job of it.

"Don't twitter, like a bunch of chatterboxes, but speak out loud like fighters for a cause, and speak clearly and forcefully," Lenin said with animation. "A congress is not a parlour where women display their charm, as we read in novels. A congress is an arena in which we fight for the knowledge we need for revolutionary action. Show that you can fight. In the first place, of course, against our enemies, but also within the Party, should the need arise. After all, the broad masses of women are at stake. Our Russian Party will back every proposal and measure that will help to win over these masses. If the women are not with us the counter-revolutionaries may succeed in setting them against us. We must always bear this in mind."

"The mass of the women must become ours though they were riveted to heaven by chains," I said, carrying on Lenin's thought. "Here, in the hub of the revolution with its seething, throbbing life, I have evolved a plan for a grand international mass demonstration of the working women. I was particularly inspired to do this by your big non-partisan women's conferences and congresses. We should have tried to transform them from national into international ones. It is undoubtedly a fact that the world war and its aftermath have deeply shaken the vast bulk of the women of the various classes and sections of society.

They have begun to ferment, they have been set in motion. Their distressing worries about securing a livelihood and a content for their life confront them with problems the existence of which most of them hardly suspected and only a small minority fully appreciated. Bourgeois society is unable to provide a satisfactory solution for them. Only communism can do that. We must compel the broad masses of women in the capitalist countries to realize this and for that purpose must call a non-partisan international women's congress."

Lenin did not reply at once. Wearing an introspective look and tightly compressing his lips with a slight protrusion of the lower he sat there for a while wrapt in deep thought.

"Yes, we must do that," was his reply. "The plan is fine. But a fine plan, and even an excellent one, is worth nothing unless it is well executed. Have you thought about its execution? What is your idea on that score?"

I explained to Lenin in detail what I considered ought to be done. My idea was first to form a committee of communist women from various countries in close and constant contact with our national sections to prepare for, hold and make use of the congress. Whether this committee was to work officially and openly from the very start had to be weighed from the point of view of expediency. At any rate the first task of the committee members would be to make contact in each country with the women leaders of the organized female workers, with those of the proletarian political women's movement, with the bourgeois women's organizations of every trend and description, and finally with outstanding female physicians, teachers, writers, etc., and to form a national non-partisan preparatory committee. From among the members of these national committees an international committee was to be formed to arrange the convocation of the international

congress and fix the agenda and the time and place of opening the congress.

In my opinion the congress ought to take up in the first place women's right to engage in trades and professions. In the meantime such questions as unemployment, equal pay for equal work, a legal 8-hour day, labour protection for women, organization of trade unions, social care of mother and child, social measures to improve the position of housekeepers and mothers, etc., would also have to be taken up. Moreover, the agenda should include: the status of women in laws on marriage and domestic relations, in public law and laws on political rights. After substantiating my above proposals I explained that in my opinion the national committees in the individual countries would have to make thorough preparations for the congress by arranging a campaign to be conducted at meetings and in the press. This campaign was to be particularly important. It was to rouse the broad masses of women, provide impetus for a serious study of the problems submitted to them, draw their attention to the congress and thereby to communism and the parties of the Communist International. The campaign would have to be waged in such a way as to reach the working women of all social strata. It would have to ensure the attendance and participation at the congress of representatives of all organizations concerned and also of women delegates from open women's meetings. The congress was to be a "popular representative body" in an entirely different sense from a bourgeois parliament.

It goes without saying that the communist women must be not only the motive force but also the leading force in the preparatory work, which should be energetically supported by our sections. The same applies of course also to the activities of the International Committee, to the work of the congress itself and to the extensive use to be made of it. On all questions concerning the congress

agenda communist theses should be submitted with corresponding resolutions carefully couched from the aspect of principle and skilfully substantiated, with a scientific array of the relative social facts. These theses must be first discussed and approved by the Executive Committee of the Comintern. The communist decisions and slogans should form the focal point around which the work of the congress and public attention should centre. After the congress they must be disseminated among the masses of the women with the aid of agitation and propaganda so that these slogans may in the future serve as patterns for holding women's international mass demonstrations. Needless to say, all this requires as an essential condition that the communist women should come out in all the committees and at the congress itself as a firm, homogeneous whole, that they should act in unison, with joint forces, lucid in their principles and unshaken in their faith in planned action. No action previously not agreed upon may be taken.

In the course of my explanation Lenin nodded several times in approval and interposed some brief remarks.

"It seems to me, Clara," he said, "that you have thought this matter over very well from the political aspect and in the main also from the organizational angle. I fully agree that in the present situation such a congress could accomplish much. It offers the possibility of our winning the broad masses of women, particularly those in the various trades and professions, such as industrial workers and housemaids, as well as teachers and others engaged in professions. This would be very, very fine. Just think of the situation. At a moment of big economic clashes or political strikes, what an influx of forces the class-conscious indignation of the masses of womankind would bring to the revolutionary proletariat! Provided of course that we are able to win them over and keep them on our side. Our gains would be great, nothing short of im-

mense. But what would you say in answer to the following few questions? The state authorities will probably very severely frown down upon the idea of calling this congress and will try to prevent it. However they are not likely to throttle it outright. At any rate that will not frighten you. But are you not afraid that you communist women will be overwhelmed in the committees and at the congress itself by the numerical superiority of the representatives of the bourgeoisie and of reformism and by their undoubtedly greater adroitness? And then are you really convinced that our communist comrades are, in the first place, schooled in Marxism, that a shock group can be picked from them that will come out of the fray with honour?"

I told Lenin in reply that the authorities were not likely to use the mailed fist on the congress. Ridicule and boorish attacks against it would only agitate in favour of it. The greater number and deftness of the non-communist elements we Communists could more than match with the scientific superiority of historical materialism in respect to the scope of social problems studied and illuminated by it, and the perseverance with which we present our demand that they be solved. Last but not least, we could offset all their arguments by referring to the victory of the proletarian revolution in Russia and its work in the sphere of the emancipation of women. The weak, inadequate training of some of our comrades could be made up by planned preparation and joint work. In this respect I expect the very best from the Russian communist women. They must form the iron core of our phalanx. With them I would calmly hazard much more than clashes at a congress. Besides even if we lose out on a count of votes the very fact that we did fight will put communism in the forefront and will be of signal propagandist importance and at the same time will establish new points of support enabling us to continue our work.

Lenin laughed out loud.

"You are as enthusiastic as ever about the Russian women revolutionaries. Yes indeed, old love is not forgotten. I think you are right. Even defeat after a stubbornly fought struggle would be a gain, would be preparing for future conquests among the masses of working women. In general it is an undertaking worth the risk. It cannot possibly prove a total failure. But of course I hope for victory and wish you success from the bottom of my heart. It would considerably enhance our strength, would widen and fortify our front of struggle, it would vivify our ranks, set them in motion and activize them. That is always useful. Moreover, the congress would increase the unrest, uncertainty, contradictions and conflicts in the camp of the bourgeoisie and its reformist friends. One can just imagine who is going to sit down to deliberate with the 'hyenas of the revolution,' if things will go well under their leadership: here will be found both honest, tame female Social-Democrats under the supreme guidance of Scheidemann, Dittmann and Legien, pious Christian women blessed by the pope or following the teachings of Luther, real daughters of privy counsellors and newly-baked councillors of state, fashionable lady-like English women pacifists, and flaming French suffragettes. What a picture of chaos, of the decay of the bourgeois world, the congress is bound to present! What a portrayal of its utterly hopeless condition! The congress would intensify the disintegration and thereby would weaken the counterrevolution. Every enfeeblement of the forces of the enemy is tantamount to a strengthening of our might. I am for the congress. And so, get started. I wish you success in the struggle."

We then spoke about the situation in Germany, particularly the impending "Unity Congress" of the old Spartacans[10] with the left wing of the Independents.[11] Thereupon Lenin hastily left, exchanging friendly greetings with

several comrades who were working in the room through which he had to pass.

Glad and full of hope I sat down to the preparatory work. However, the congress idea came to nothing on account of the opposition to it on the part of the German and Bulgarian communist women who at that time directed the biggest communist women's movements outside that of Soviet Russia. They were flatly against calling the congress.

When I informed Lenin of this he answered:

"It is a pity, a great pity! These comrades missed a splendid opportunity to open up to the broad masses of women new and better perspectives and thereby to enlist them in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Who can tell whether such a favourable moment will soon recur? You must strike while the iron is hot. But the task remains. You must continue your search for a way to the masses of women whom capitalism has plunged into dire need. You must look for it no matter what the price. You must not shirk this imperative task. Without the organized activity of the masses under communist leadership there can be no victory over capitalism and no building of communism. Hence the subterranean, hitherto concealed section of the masses of women must finally also get into motion."

* * *

Gone is the first year spent by the revolutionary proletariat without Lenin. That year has shown the enduring nature of his cause, has shown the great genius of the leader. Salvoes of guns announce the mournful hour when Lenin one year ago forever closed his far-seeing, penetrative eyes. I see an endless procession of sad men and women—working people. They are going to Lenin's resting place. Their mourning is my mourning, the mourning

of the millions. Recrudescent pain irresistibly awakens recollections of him. It brings back the realities of his day, before which the difficulties of the present fade into insignificance. I hear again every word Lenin uttered in conversation with me, see every change in the expression of his face. And I must write, must.... Banners are lowered at Lenin's tomb, banners steeped in the blood of the fighters for the revolution. Laurel wreaths are deposited. Not one of them could be left out. And I add to them these modest lines.

January 1925

LENIN AND THE MASSES

When I recollect the talks I had with Lenin his words come to life again in me as if I had heard them today, and they all bear one characteristic trait of the great revolutionary leader, namely, the deep-rootedness of his relations with the broad masses of the labouring people, particularly the workers and peasants.

Lenin was imbued with great and sincere sympathy for these masses. Their needs and their sufferings—from really painful pin-pricks to blows of a stick, part of their daily life—sorely grieved his soul. He looked upon every such case that came to his notice or that he witnessed himself as a reflection of the fate of innumerable others. With what emotion he told me early in November 1920 about some peasants—"walking emissaries"—who had come to see him a short time before, armed with a mandate from their native villagers to lay their grievances before him.

"They were in tatters, with rags on their feet and wearing just bast shoes. And in such bad weather! Their feet were soaking wet and getting blue with frost. I of course ordered that they be given footwear from the military stores. But what kind of relief is that? Thousands and tens of thousands of peasants and workers have to walk about today improperly shod, their legs covered

with wounds. It is impossible to provide footwear for them all at state expense. How deep and terrible is the hell from which our poor people have to emerge, have to forge a way out! The road to its emancipation is much harder than that of your German proletariat. But I have faith in their heroism. They *will* forge a way out!"

At first Lenin had spoken low, almost in a whisper. But the last sentence he uttered loud, with tightened lips and an expression of firm resolve.

After I had spent a few days in Ivanovo-Voznesensk I was to report to him my unforgettable impressions about the okrug [district] conference that had taken place there, about the meeting that was packed to overflowing and its prevailing mood, my visits to the children's homes and the big textile mill where mostly women were employed.

Lenin was especially interested in what I had seen and experienced among the small children and youngsters. He questioned me in detail. I told him how the working women there clustered around me and showered me with questions about the condition of their fellow-workers in Germany and how they said in conclusion:

"Look at our bare, sore legs. We only have shoes of bast. It's cold and we have to walk to work. Tell Lenin that we would be very glad to receive good shoes and rubbers for the winter. And let them give us as much bread as they can! But don't fail to tell him also that we'll hold out even without all that and even if still other needs should arise."

Lenin listened to me very attentively. His heart went out to them. That was written on his face.

"I know how patiently these poor folks suffer privations," he exclaimed. "It is terrible that the Soviet Government cannot offer immediate help. Our new state must first maintain its existence, hold out in this struggle. This demands enormous sacrifice. I am likewise aware that our proletarian women will hold out. They're hero-

ines, great heroines. Emancipation does not fall into their laps like a boon from heaven. They are earning it, buying it with the sacrifices they make, paying for it with their blood even when they do not face the rifles of the Whites."

Lenin had a deep inner understanding of the spiritual suffering of unfree man caught in the vice of obsolete social and moral forms. But however great was Lenin's sympathy with the hard lot of the masses, he did not let it go at that. His attitude to them was not merely based on lachrymose sentiment, as with many, but had its deep roots in his evaluation of the masses as a historical, revolutionary force. In the exploited and unfree Lenin saw fighters against exploitation and enslavement, and he valued them as such. In all those who took up the cudgels he saw builders of the new social order, which spelled the doom of all exploitation and enslavement of man by man. The demolition of the old pillars of exploitation and oppression—the job of the masses—was with him intimately connected with the foundation of a system free from oppression and exploitation, which is also the job of the masses.

To Lenin, as he once told me himself, quantity was no longer an adequate criterion of the masses needed for the emancipatory job of the proletarian revolution that was to remake the world. He thought what we needed was "quality within quantity." To Lenin the revolutionary mass victoriously demolishing the old, and duty-bound to create the new, was not a colourless and impersonal something, not a crumbly clod which a handful of leaders can mould as they like. He appreciated the mass as a union of the best part of that agglomeration of countless separate individuals called humanity—of the part that struggles and aims aloft. What must be done is to arouse the sentiment and awareness of this humanity, develop and elevate its proletarian class-consciousness to a higher degree of organized activity.

Lenin, who interpreted the mass in the spirit of Marx, naturally attached great importance to its all-sided cultural development. He considered it the greatest gain of the revolution and a sure guarantee that communism would be achieved.

"The Red October," he told me once, "opened wide the road to a cultural revolution on the grandest scale, which is being brought about on the basis of the incipient economic revolution and in constant interaction with it. Imagine millions of men and women of various nationalities and races and of various degrees of culture all striving on towards a new life. A superb task confronts the Soviet Government. In a few years or decades it must redress the cultural wrong of many centuries. In addition to the agencies and institutions of the Soviet Government, cultural progress is promoted also by numerous organizations and societies of scientists, artists and teachers. Vast cultural work is carried on by our trade unions at the different enterprises and by our co-operative organizations in the villages. The activity of our Party is very much in evidence everywhere. A great deal is being done. Our successes are great compared with what there was, but they look small considering what remains to be done. Our cultural revolution has only just begun."

Casually referring to a splendid ballet being performed in the Bolshoi Theatre, Lenin remarked with a smile:

"Our ballet, theatre, and opera, and our exhibitions of what is new and newest in painting and sculpture are proof to many people abroad that we Bolsheviks are not at all such horrible barbarians as was believed there. I do not deny the significance of such and similar cultural manifestations of our society. I do not underrate their import. But I admit I am more gratified by the setting up of two or three elementary schools in some out-of-the-way villages than by the most magnificent exhibit at some art show. A rise in the general cultural standards of the

masses will provide the sound and solid basis needed for the training of the powerful and inexhaustible forces that will develop Soviet art, science and technology. Our aspirations to establish culture and to disseminate it here in our country is extraordinarily great. It must be admitted that we are experimenting a lot. Alongside of serious work there is much that is puerile, immature, that consumes a great deal of our energy and means. Creative life evidently requires extravagance in society as well as in nature. We already have the most important requisites for the cultural revolution since the conquest of power by the proletariat, namely: the awakening of the masses, their aspiration to culture. New people are growing up, produced by the new social order and creating this order."

Five years have elapsed since the great friend, awakener and educator of the masses closed his eyes which had looked upon the small and insignificant man with such abounding love and faith. But Lenin's cause is not extinct though he himself be dead. It lives. Its influence is effectively penetrating beyond the borders of the party which he founded and which he led, into the nameless broad masses which in the Soviet Union are engaged in socialist construction, in the capitalist countries are waging an emancipative struggle for power, and in the colonial countries are rising against their lords and masters, the exploiters and oppressors. The historic, creative undertaking which they are bringing to fruition will be a monument worthy of his genius.

NOTES

[1] *Karlstadt* (1480-1541)—leading figure of the Reformation. p. 18

[2] The reference is to an armed uprising of the workers in Central Germany in March 1921. This action was not supported by the workers of the other industrial regions and was therefore quickly crushed despite the heroic fighting of the workers. On the March action of the proletariat in Germany see V. I. Lenin, "Speech in Defence of the Tactics of the Communist International," delivered on July 1, 1921 at the Third Congress of the Communist International, *Works*, 4th Russ. ed., Vol. 32, pp. 447-453; and "Letter to the German Communists," *ibid.*, pp. 487-498. p. 28

[3] The *Leghorn Congress of the Italian Socialist Party* took place in January 1921. It fiercely debated the conditions of admission to the Communist International.

Part of the delegates, adherents of the Comintern, who were in favour of unconditionally accepting the Comintern terms and demanded a break with the reformists, walked out of the Congress and founded the Communist Party of Italy. p. 29

[4] *Paul Levi* was a delegate of the Communist Party of Germany to the Second Congress of the Comintern. In March 1921 he was expelled from the Communist Party and joined the Social-Democrats. p. 32

[5] *Reuter (Friesland)*—German Social-Democrat. In 1918 joined the Spartacus League. At the Third Congress of the Comintern adhered to the "Lefts." After that Congress he became a Social-Democrat. p. 34

[6] *Rosa*—Rosa Luxemburg.
Karl—Karl Liebknecht.
Leo—Leo Jogisches (Tyszka). p. 37

[7] *Inessa*—Inessa Armand. p. 68

[8] The *Communist Labour Party of Germany*—an anarcho-syndicalist petty-bourgeois group formed in 1919 from "Left" elements that had split away from the Communist Party of Germany. As it had not the slightest anchorage among the masses of workers in Germany the group subsequently degenerated into an insignificant sect hostile to the Communist Party and the working class. p. 71

[9] The *Third Congress of the Comintern* heard the report of Clara Zetkin on the revolutionary women's movement and adopted the following resolutions:

1) On Strengthening International Ties Between Women Communists and on the Tasks of the International Secretariat of the Comintern on Work Among Women;

2) On the Forms and Methods of Communist Work Among Women. p. 79

[10] The *Spartacans*—members of the *Spartacus League* formed in January 1916, during the First World War, under the leadership of Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Franz Mehring, Clara Zetkin, and others. After the November revolution in Germany, to be more exact, in December 1918, the League members founded the Communist Party of Germany. p. 84

[11] The *Independents*—the *Independent Social-Democratic Party of Germany*—a centrist party set up in April 1917. In December 1920 the Left section of the Independents united with the Communist Party of Germany while the Right elements formed a separate party and in 1922 re-entered the Social-Democratic Party of Germany. p. 84

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